



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

Robert Jenrick (Conservative): Last month, Niyak Ghorbani was wrongly arrested for holding up a placard saying that Hamas are terrorists. He was later de-arrested. Yesterday, just yards from this place, the same man was once again arrested for holding the same sign. He was then de-arrested again. Hamas are terrorists, and we should all say so and defend freedom of speech. Will my right hon. Friend organise a debate in Government time on how we can end two-tier policing and restore public confidence in the Metropolitan police?

Penny Mordaunt: ... This is an important matter that other hon. Members have raised in the Chamber, particularly when the first incident happened. The policy is clear, and I am pleased that, in both situations, the arrest was reversed, but it goes to show the importance of our having in place not just the right policies, but the operational policing plan, as well as training being undertaken to ensure that officers, who often face difficult and confusing situations, know exactly what they should be doing and when. I shall ensure that both the Home Secretary and the head of the Metropolitan police have heard his remarks.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-04-18/debates/826A8B9A-7EEF-41A1-BF9A-CBE714966D0B/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-E88D35DD-CDAA-47A8-AF79-17E59A7AB340>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... One thing that has not yet happened, but may happen in the next week or two, is the publication of the report from the Select Committee on the Holocaust Memorial Bill through its hybrid procedure. It is coming later than we anticipated, and may contain some interesting recommendations or decisions. Will the Government say, as soon as possible, whether they intend to go on trying to ram this proposal through? They have already spent more than £30 million achieving nothing in the last eight and a half years, so will they have a roundtable and consider spending £20 million getting a memorial up in the next two years, during the lifetime of some of the holocaust survivors, and moving the learning centre to the Imperial War Museum?

Penny Mordaunt: ... He knows that a process is being gone through at the moment for the memorial, and I will again ensure that the relevant Secretary of State has heard what he said today. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-04-18/debates/826A8B9A-7EEF-41A1-BF9A-CBE714966D0B/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-2A3066C1-226F-458C-9AE4-9191E08D9656>

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Israel

See also Commons oral answer "Business of the House" that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Armenian Church: Jerusalem

Edward Leigh (Conservative) [902239] Whether the Church has taken recent steps to support the Armenian church in the old city of Jerusalem.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner (Andrew Selous): The Bishop of Southwark has raised this issue repeatedly in the other place over the past six months, and it remains an ongoing and very concerning issue. Only 15 days ago, an unlawful eviction was led by the Israeli police within the premises of the Armenian Patriarchate, with no court orders or permits presented.

Edward Leigh: Those of us who are good friends of Israel need to call out the violent activities of the settler movement. The Armenian Christians have enjoyed the best part of 2,000 years in their part of the old city in tranquillity. The appalling incident on 3 April was led not just by thugs but by an Israeli officer called Assaf Harel. Frankly, there was downright intimidation and an attempt to force out Armenian Christians. The Christian population in the old city has declined from 25% a century ago to just 1%. Will the Church of England stand up for Christians in the old city?

Andrew Selous: ... It would be an absolute tragedy if there were to be no Christians left in the Holy Land. The House will have heard the figures that he has just presented. The pressures facing the Armenian church exemplify those faced by other churches in Jerusalem and the west bank. The Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem is one of the custodians of the Holy Land and overseers of the four quarters of the city. The Church of England is absolutely clear that the historic

settlement and the status quo of Jerusalem need to be maintained. The lack of any call for restraint from the Israeli Government is escalating tensions in Jerusalem, and that remains a great concern.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-04-18/debates/5388E9FF-7176-4D79-8D93-4DE495514394/ArmenianChurchJerusalem>

Business of the House

Lucy Powell (Labour Co-op): ...The attacks by Iran on Israel have rightly been condemned by all sides of the House. Thankfully, its intentions were thwarted, and we join together in calling for restraint and de-escalation in the aftermath. We cannot let those recent events deter or distract from international efforts to bring about a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza and create the conditions for a lasting two-state solution. ...

Penny Mordaunt: ... On Monday evening, the very special Jewish festival of Passover begins. Like their ancestors before them, Jewish families around the world will gather around their Seder tables to retell the story of the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt. However, this year many of them will be leaving an empty seat open at those tables for those still held captive by Hamas in Gaza. I hope this will be the last Jewish holiday where they are unable to celebrate with their families, and wish chag sameach to all those celebrating. I also thank all hon. Members for their resolve and support with regard to Israel's security—that is an important message that we send from this House. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-04-18/debates/826A8B9A-7EEF-41A1-BF9A-CBE714966D0B/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-D2AD40CA-0711-477F-9271-FC86DEF6A9DD>

House of Commons Written Answers

Iran: Israel

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [21847] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the UK's participation in the military operation in defence of Israel on 13 April 2024 was carried out under the terms of the agreement signed between the British Armed Forces and the Israeli Defence Force on 2 December 2020.

Leo Docherty: No.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-15/21847>

Iran: Israel

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [21848] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether Israel sought military assistance from the UK for the action taken against Iranian drones and missiles on 13 April 2024.

Leo Docherty: For operational security reasons and as a matter of policy, the Ministry of Defence does not offer comment or information relating to foreign nations' military operations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-15/21848>

Israel: Arms Trade

Richard Burgon (Labour) [20359] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his Canadian counterpart on the reasons for which that country has suspended arms exports to Israel.

Andrew Mitchell: We have regular engagement with our allies, including Canada, on the conflict. Canada has made clear that, while it has not approved new licences for military equipment since 8 January of this year, it has not suspended extant licences approved before that date.

The following four questions all received the same answer

Israel and Palestinians: Aid Workers

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [21568] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of the safety of aid workers operating in (a) Israel and (b) Palestine.

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [21569] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps his Department is taking to help implement effective deconfliction in Gaza in order to facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian aid.

Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) [21570] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of reports that a UNICEF humanitarian convoy was hit by live ammunition in northern Gaza on 9 April 2024.

Israel and Occupied Territories: Aid Workers

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [21871] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent assessment he has made of the level of risk to the safety of aid workers in (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and what steps he is taking to help protect (i) international aid agencies and (ii) their employees from (A) threats and (B) other hindrance.

Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary has called on Israel to reform its deconfliction mechanism to ensure the safety of aid workers and to make progress on the UN's minimal operating requirements, including more visas and driver approvals granted, as well as more trucks permitted to cross into Gaza.

The Prime Minister set out the need for more aid to enter Gaza in his call with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 2 April, and that far too many aid workers and ordinary civilians have lost their lives.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-15/21568>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-15/21569>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-15/21570>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-15/21871>

West Bank: Terrorism

Theresa Villiers (Conservative) [20560] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the terror attack in the southern West Bank on

Andrew Mitchell: This terror attack serves as a reminder of the daily security challenges Israel faces. There can be no justification for such acts of violence. Every Israeli and Palestinian has the right to live in peace and security. As we have stated previously, for there to be a lasting peace, Israel's security must be assured. We continue to monitor the situation closely, and we continue to have regular discussions with Israeli counterparts on all aspects of the conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-26/20560>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We must start with fixing the immediate crisis in Gaza: UK statement at the UN Security Council

The United Kingdom reiterates its commitment to making progress towards a two-state solution, in which a safe and secure Israel lives alongside a sovereign, viable Palestinian

state.

We agree that the people of the West Bank and Gaza must be given the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future. And it needs to be irreversible. This is not entirely in our gift. But our recognition of a Palestinian state should be part of it.

We believe that such recognition of Palestinian statehood should not come at the start of a new process, but it doesn't have to be at the very end of the process.

We must start with fixing the immediate crisis in Gaza.

Gaza is Occupied Palestinian Territory and must be part of a future Palestinian state.

However, Hamas is still in control of parts of Gaza and Israeli hostages remain in captivity – this shows that we are still at the start of the process.

Ensuring Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza and removing Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel are essential and unavoidable steps on the road to lasting peace; as is working together to support the new Palestinian government as it takes much-needed steps on reform and resumes governance in Gaza as well as the West Bank.

We abstained on this resolution today because we must keep our focus on securing an immediate pause in order to get aid in and hostages out; then making progress towards a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

Our Foreign Secretary has been in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories this week to offer our support towards achieving this.

We will continue to work urgently to help bring peace and galvanise a political process towards a two-state solution which provides justice and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-must-start-with-fixing-the-immediate-crisis-in-gaza-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

Department for Business and Trade

Updated Trade and Investment factsheet: Israel

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/661fd93fced96304c8757ee7/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-04-19.pdf>

Updated Trade and Investment factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/661fe7013771f5b3ee757f9c/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-04-19.pdf>

United Nations

Security Council Fails to Recommend Full United Nations Membership for State of Palestine, Owing to Veto Cast by United States

The Security Council today blocked Palestine's bid to become a full member of the United Nations due to a United States veto on a draft resolution that would have recommended the granting of such status.

The proposal, submitted by Algeria, received 12 votes in favour, with the United States casting a negative vote and Switzerland and the United Kingdom abstaining. ...

In 2011, Palestine submitted an application to become a full UN Member State. Although that aspiration did not materialize, it obtained the status of a non-member observer State in November 2012 ...

An application for admission to UN membership must be approved by the Council before being forwarded to the Assembly, where the matter requires at least two-thirds support to pass. ...

Introducing the draft resolution, **the representative of Algeria** said ... “It is the least we could do to honour the debts we owe to its people,” he said. Palestine fulfils membership criteria as defined in the UN Charter. “It is time for Palestine to take its rightful place among the community of nations,” ... “Peace will come from Palestine’s inclusion, not from its exclusion.” ...

Speaking after the vote, **the representative of the Russian Federation**, spotlighted the simple question before the Council today: “Are the Palestinians worth being part of the global family?” While most of the international community has consistently answered in the affirmative, the United States believes differently ... namely, that the Palestinians “do not deserve to have their own State”. For that reason, Washington, D.C., is ready to turn a blind eye to Israel’s crimes against civilians in Gaza, force them to submit to the occupying Power, transform them into servants and second-class persons and, perhaps, oust them from their territory once and for all. The United States’ veto today “is a hopeless attempt to stop the inevitable course of history”, he stressed ...

The representative of the United States expressed support for Palestinian Statehood within a comprehensive peace agreement. A sustainable peace can only be achieved via a two-State solution with Israel’s security guaranteed. His country has long been clear that “premature actions” at the UN, even with the best intentions, will not achieve Statehood for the Palestinian people. ...

The representative of France said the time has come to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a two-State solution. France supported the draft as Palestine’s admission as a full UN member could facilitate the implementation of such a solution and strengthen the Palestinian Authority. ...

The representative of the United Kingdom said her country is committed to a two-State solution. Recognition of a Palestinian State should not be at the start of the process, but it does not need to be at the very end of it, she said. She called for the crisis in Gaza to be fixed first, noting that Gaza must be part of a future Palestinian State. But Hamas is still in control of parts of it and Israeli hostages remain in captivity, she underlined ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

The representative of Switzerland, whose delegation abstained, noted that it would be preferable to determine Palestinians’ membership at the UN at a future stage — “once there has been peace”. Voicing concern over the catastrophic situation in the Middle East, she underscored the need to ensure the implementation of the Council’s resolution and a ceasefire without further ado to restore political solutions to the conflict. ...

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine underscored: “Our right to self-determination has never once been subject to bargaining or negotiation.” It is inalienable and eternal, and not subject to manipulation, domination or conditions. “Especially not by Israel — the occupying Power, the ethnic-cleansing Power, the colonial Power,” he stressed, despite its determination to evict Palestinians from their homeland, eliminate their identity, uproot their civilization and besiege their future. Underscoring that “we will not disappear”, he said that Palestinians remain on their land out of patience, steadfastness, hope and sacrifice despite oppression, exile, enslavement, persecution, displacement and eviction. Stating that his delegation came to the Council today to “salvage what can be saved”, he noted that most Council members stood on the side of justice, freedom and hope “in line with the legal and ethical principles that must govern our world”. He also thanked all those who supported Palestine’s request for UN membership for understanding Palestinians’ pain at this moment.

Emphasizing that Palestine accepted the two-State solution as an international vision of peace and engaged in the peace process, he said that Palestinian leadership continues to be committed to this peaceful track. He questioned, however, if Israel is a true partner for peace, stressing that it insists on occupation, murder and siege “to snuff out any hope of a sovereign Palestinian State”. Asking those present if they will give Israel the time it needs to annex Palestinian land, the immunity it needs to evict and kill and the right to veto

Palestine's full UN membership, he underscored that such inclusion is not "symbolic". Rather, it is a manifestation of Palestinians' right to self-determination and "an investment in peace", he urged, adding: "We don't want to replace anyone, we want to enter your club as an equal." Also stating that Palestinians know best what a just solution is — a free Palestine — he reiterated: "We will not disappear."

The representative of Israel thanked the United States, in particular President Joseph Biden, for standing up for "truth and morality in the face of hypocrisy and politics". Calling the draft resolution destructive, he said the Palestinian Authority does not meet the basic criteria, has no authority over its territory and supports terror. He questioned how Palestinians can be called peace-loving when they are paying terrorists to slaughter Israelis. None of their leaders condemns terrorism or the 7 October massacre. They call Hamas their brothers, he added, and they do not recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State. He noted that the Palestinian representative at the meeting does not represent Hamas, and in turn does not represent at least half of the Palestinian people.

"Most of you decided to reward Palestinian terror with [a] Palestinian State," he said, saying these votes will embolden Palestinian rejectionism and make peace almost impossible. Despite the evidence he has brought to the Council, speaking to it "is like speaking to a brick wall", he said, adding: "I pray that the day will come when you will understand the magnitude of the mistake you are making here. I pray that you will understand before it is too late."

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15670.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

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

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

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

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

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

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

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

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

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

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

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes 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

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator: Charity banking challenges survey 2024

(closing date 15 May 2024)

<https://www.oscr.org.uk/news/have-your-say-charity-banking-challenges-survey-2024/>

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