



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Spoliation Advisory Panel Newsletter- August 2024, No.18

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Spoliation Advisory Panel Newsletter- Special Edition: The work of the European Restitution Committees- Conference Report

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Israel

Downing Street

Keir Starmer I am completely shocked at the horrific and senseless killing of six hostages in Gaza by Hamas. My thoughts are with their loved ones at this awful time. Hamas must release all the hostages now, and a ceasefire deal must be agreed by all sides immediately to end the suffering.

https://x.com/Keir_Starmer/status/1830223146194207187

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

David Lammy The UK condemns Hamas' appalling murder of 6 innocent hostages in Gaza in the strongest terms. I offer my deepest condolences to those grieving at this awful time. Hamas must release all the hostages immediately, and all sides must accept the deal

on the table to end this war.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1830224281990758810>

Scottish Government FoI Release

Correspondence concerning United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202400403608/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/35e54dkd>

United Nations

Speakers in Security Council Urge Israel to Refrain from Military Action, Evacuation Orders in Gaza as UN, Aid Partners Prepare for Vaccine Campaign amid Polio Outbreak

As the United Nations and its humanitarian partners prepare for a vaccination campaign in Gaza to deal with the polio outbreak, speakers in the Security Council urged Israel to refrain from military operations and evacuation orders to ensure that those delivering and receiving services can do so safely.

The 10-month-old infant who died of polio in Gaza — after 25 years of a polio-free Palestine — was born during wartime and never vaccinated, reported **Mike Ryan, Deputy Director-General and Executive Director of the Health Emergency Programme at the World Health Organization (WHO)**. ... He therefore welcomed the commitment to “area-specific humanitarian pauses and suspension of evacuation orders” for the implementation of a two-round polio vaccination campaign, set to begin in Gaza on 1 September. During each round, the Palestinian Ministry of Health — in collaboration with WHO, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) — will provide two drops of a WHO-prequalified “nOPV2” vaccine to more than 640,000 children under 10 years of age. ...

Noting that at least 90 per cent vaccination coverage during each round is needed to stop the outbreak and “prevent international spread of polio”, he stressed that — due to factors such as insecurity, damaged infrastructure and constant displacement — “we know an additional day or two is very often needed to achieve sufficient coverage”. “The safety of every single one of the over 2,180 vaccinators must be guaranteed,” he underscored.

He also detailed the “much larger public health catastrophe” in which the polio outbreak is occurring. As of 25 August, only 44 per cent of primary health-care facilities are functional and attacks on health care continue to be reported. Evacuation orders are further disrupting health-care provision, endangering critical health infrastructure and hampering the delivery of essential supplies. ... he stressed: “The world cannot stand by as Gaza’s health system crumbles under the weight of this conflict.”

Also briefing the Council today was **Joyce Msuya, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Acting Emergency Relief Coordinator**, who described the humanitarian community in Gaza as working relentlessly to stop the spread of polio, “a disease that the world thought it had under control”. ... Noting that Israel has facilitated the entry of all requested polio vaccines and equipment, she said: “What is now most important is to ensure both the security and access needed to implement the campaign effectively.” ...

She also pointed to a spike in evacuation orders issued by the Israeli military, noting that the 25 August order led to the largest relocation of UN staff since October 2023. “Communities live in a state of limbo, never knowing when the next order to flee will come,” she said, adding that civilians are now being forced into the equivalent of 11 per cent of

the territory of Gaza. ...

“What we have witnessed over the past 11 months — and continue to witness — calls into question the world’s commitment to the international legal order that was designed to prevent these tragedies,” she added. Hungry, thirsty, sick and homeless, civilians have been pushed beyond the limits of human endurance. ...

“We have repeatedly informed you of the harrowing levels of death, injury and destruction that raise very serious concerns about compliance with international humanitarian law,” she said. ...

Polio had nearly been eradicated through the dedicated efforts of international health partners, **the representative of the United States** observed. The return of confirmed polio cases in Gaza threatens the health of the most vulnerable Palestinian civilians, including children, he said, adding: “It is especially important for Israel to facilitate access for agencies carrying out the vaccination campaign and for it to ensure periods of calm and refrain from military operations during the vaccination campaign.”

Urging that country to avoid further evacuation orders, he also expressed alarm about reports that the Israel Defense Forces fired repeatedly on a WFP vehicle on Wednesday. Though Israel has said after an initial review that this was the result of a communication error between its military units, “the simple fact is almost 11 months into this conflict incidents such as yesterday’s remain all too common”, he pointed out. Also noting another incident in which Israel’s army fired towards a UNICEF vehicle, he said: “Israel must not only take ownership for its mistakes but also take concrete actions to ensure the IDF does not fire on UN personnel again. ...

The representative of the United Kingdom also expressed concern about the Israel Defense Forces opening fire on the WFP truck, noting that the vehicle had been fully coordinated with Israel and had UN workers inside. Calling on Tel Aviv to take immediate steps to protect aid workers, he said that despite repeated calls for deconfliction and protection of aid operations, such appalling attacks on UN and aid convoys continue to take place. ...

Welcoming Israel’s agreement for pauses on military operations so that WHO and health agencies can deliver a safe and effective campaign, he said “we now need to see this in action.” ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

Japan’s speaker deplored the attack on the WFP vehicle carrying humanitarian cargo to central Gaza. “Clearly, deconfliction mechanisms are still woefully insufficient,” he said. The so-called “safe zones” are nothing of the sort. ...

Several delegates drew attention to the burden posed by Israel’s evacuation orders ... Before 7 October 2023, there were 1,200 persons per square kilometre in Gaza — that number has risen to 40,000. ...

“This is unacceptable,” **Switzerland’s delegate** stressed, noting that the Israeli army’s orders have caused the displacement of almost 90 per cent of the inhabitants, who live on less than 11 per cent of the Gaza Strip. In addition to uprooting already exhausted families, the orders pose enormous obstacles to aid activities. And with each displacement, humanitarian actors lose access to the premises and logistical infrastructure they need to operate ...

China’s delegate noted that Israel’s expansion of settlements and ramping up of searches, arrests and raids against the Palestinians are all violations of international law. Citing the Israeli military’s launch Wednesday of a large-scale military operation targeting Jenin and other cities in the West Bank, he said senior Israeli officials recently spoke of using the same approach in the West Bank as they have employed in Gaza operations. “Shocked by such extreme remarks,” he stated: “We must never allow the same humanitarian catastrophe to happen in the West Bank, which would turn it into another hell on Earth.”

“**France** is opposed to any occupation by Israel of the West Bank,” that country’s representative said, condemning all acts of provocation and any unilateral measures both there and in Jerusalem. Israel’s settlement policy is in breach of international law, she

said, demanding that the country take all measures to stop the unacceptable settler attacks on the civilian Palestinian population in West Bank. ...

The representatives of the United States and the Russian Federation exchanged words further after all the speakers in the Council had taken the floor. The former said that Moscow neither contributes to resolving the conflict in Gaza nor understands its complications; instead it demeans the work of the United States, Qatar and Egypt. The Russian Federation's representative recalled that his delegation had presented a ceasefire resolution in the Council in October which was vetoed by the delegate of the United States. ...” the representative of the United States said ... Hamas, at many times, has changed its views on some of the steps that were previously agreed on ... To which, the Russian Federation's delegate said the United States bears the brunt of responsibility for what is currently taking place in Gaza. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15805.doc.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3741>

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

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 5 days**

Gaps in Equality Legislation [Northern Ireland] (closing date 6 September 2024)

<https://consult.nia-yourassembly.org.uk/committee-for-the-executive-office/gaps-in-equality-legislation-inquiry>

Equality and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2025-2028 (closing date 3 October 2024)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/our-strategic-plan-consultation-2025-2028>

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