



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Violent Disorder

[*The Home Secretary's statement to the House of Commons*](#) was read in the Lords.

col 1072 **Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Conservative):** ... There can never be any excuse for this type of behaviour, and I agree with the Home Secretary that this was thuggish and criminal activity. There are plenty of ways to express legitimate frustrations and points of view in this country, and many do without resorting to violence and intimidation. Acting at speed to quell the disturbances was the right thing to do ...

col 1073 However, the Home Secretary's Statement yesterday also prompted a number of questions ... First, the Home Secretary described actions taken by the NPCC and referenced that: "the co-ordination infrastructure and systems that they had to work with were too weak".

Can the Minister expand on that and explain which systems were too weak and why? ... our police forces retain operational independence. That phrase may be frustrating on occasions, but it also describes an important underlying principle that Ministers, while no doubt "working daily"—to quote the Home Secretary again—should not get involved in operational matters. ...

Following on from that, what are the terms of reference for the review that the Home Secretary has commissioned to ensure that there is "sufficient public order policing for the future"? What does "sufficient" mean? ...

The Home Secretary talked about countering extremism, and that is of course welcome. She referenced Islamist and far-right extremism, but I note made no mention at all of far-left extremism. Why not? I am sorry to say that the far left is in large part responsible for the most enduring form of racism: that of anti-Semitism. That is worse now than in my lifetime, and it sickens and disgusts. I will be charitable and allow that those who conflate what is happening in the Middle East with the British Jewish community are just stupid, but some will not be, and they are just as manipulative as those who foment hatred of other groups and individuals. Can the Minister reassure us that the previous Government's work supporting CREST and the Jewish community will continue, and that anti-Semitism and those stoking it will be met with the full force of the law?

col 1074 My final questions relate to ... perceived inconsistencies in the policing of protest. ... there is a lingering suspicion that some riots and disorder attract more robust attention than others. Referring back to my previous question, there was clear evidence of anti-Semitism on our streets in relation to Israel/Gaza, and I know that the police have now made many arrests. I understand, of course, that it can be difficult to make arrests during a demonstration; the police are usually heavily outnumbered, so that could cause more trouble. Nevertheless, the impression created was one of a degree of tolerance for the chanting of well-worn anti-Semitic tropes and the display of symbols sympathetic to proscribed terrorist organisations. Similarly, in Harehills, in Leeds the police seemingly disappeared when the Romanian Roma community rioted. Why? ...

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): ... My Lords, the shocking deaths of three little girls in Southport, followed by the shocking disorder on our streets perpetrated by a minority of violent thugs, was truly frightening. There was racist mob violence in our towns and cities, clearly incited and organised by far-right groups and individuals—mainly online, where shockingly they shared the locations of hotels and hostels housing asylum seekers and migrants. ...

The bravery and professionalism of the police and emergency services are to be commended. They were dealing with what was sometimes an impossible job. However, it is disappointing that the Official Opposition has not mentioned the targeted attack on Muslim communities. They were clearly the focus of these attacks; online, we saw the most appalling Islamophobia and hate crimes. That affects not just Muslims in this country but those perceived to be Muslims, who were of course migrants and asylum seekers—and anyone perceived to be a supporter of or even associated with asylum seekers, or from an ethnic-minority community. ... Some of them felt that they could not stay in their homes, in an area such as Walthamstow that was targeted.

col 1075 Does the Minister agree that to tackle record levels of hate crimes against Muslims we need a consistent and coherent approach to tackling Islamophobia, underpinned by a working definition to better understand what Islamophobia is and is not, in the way that we have—quite rightly—a working definition of anti-Semitism? Six years ago, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims put forward the first working definition of Islamophobia after two years of consultation with 800 community groups up and down the country, with all faiths and with victims of hate crimes. That definition was accepted by all parties, apart from the last Government. Will this Government look to revisit that, and start to come to a proper understanding and definition of what we mean by Islamophobia? Do they intend to appoint an independent adviser on Islamophobia—a post that has been vacant for two years? Discrimination, prejudice and hatred damage everyone and the fabric of our society. We must work together to challenge it.

The Statement mentions far-right extremism, which has been on the rise. We saw some people on the streets with signs depicting Nazi emblems. Make no mistake, these people are entrenched in anti-Semitism if they support Nazi symbols and that kind of behaviour. ...

The Minister of State, Home Office (Lord Hanson of Flint): ... we had 40,000 police hours over the course of those riots. I pay tribute ... to police officers who gave up their leave, faced attacks, and stood for the values of this House and this Parliament in defending individuals from the Islamic community, and from other communities, who were under attack from forces which should have known better. ...

We fully support police independence. ... the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, me and other Ministers in the Home Office met police shortly after those events to encourage and understand the response that they were going to make independently. Make no mistake, when criminal acts of intimidation and Islamophobia are committed, properties are burned down and legitimate sources of government support for asylum seekers are attacked, the courts will take action. ...

col 1076 ... the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Home Office team will undertake a review not just of the incidents and the response, and not just of the capability of the response or how it was organised, but of the underlying factors behind those concerns. ...

I say to both Front Benches that extremism on all sides is something that we have to take cognisance of; we must be responsible in our approach to it and look at the underlying causes. There is much radicalisation online; there are people in bedrooms on their own being radicalised from both the left and the right, and on a whole range of issues. ...

The noble Lord's question on anti-Semitism is equally as important as the point about Islamophobia. I want to see individuals in this society respected for their beliefs. I was very pleased to see, in discussions I had with members of the Church of England, that they had reached out to colleagues from the Jewish and Muslim communities and, particularly in Southport, had stood side by side to show support and that we have respect for religious beliefs. We respect the differences in those religious beliefs and understand that people live their lives and live their religious beliefs differently, but all have a right to live, breath and support themselves in the communities that we represent. That question of tolerance is one that should come from this House.

Let there be no mistake that a crime is a crime, and when people throw rocks, abuse, intimidate, organise on social media or encourage others to do so ... those are crimes. ...

col 1077 ... the question of Islamophobia is extremely important. We live in a multicultural society. These are people of the Islamic faith who have been born here and whose fathers and mothers have been born here. It is not an issue of race but an issue of faith, and people have the right to express their faith openly, in accordance with their principles. One thing that we did in response to the attacks was to provide additional support to mosques in a protection fund. To go back to the point about anti-Semitism, that has applied equally to Jewish community organisations and facilities. We will continue to do that. ...

The Lord Bishop of Southwark: ... I am grateful that Members of the House have spoken so powerfully on the evil of anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and racist incidents, which the Minister rightly addressed as criminality. In addition to the measures announced, are His Majesty's Government seeking to address, perhaps through an inquiry, some of the underlying economic and social issues that can render people vulnerable to exploitation and incitement, to their own cost and to the detriment of the wider community?

Lord Hanson of Flint: ... While I cannot give assurances today on timescales or terms of reference ... we have to tackle the underlying causes of individuals feeling alienated from society. There is no excuse for that behaviour—it is criminal behaviour and will be dealt with as criminal behaviour—but we still have to understand the reasons why people have fallen into that criminal behaviour ...

col 1078 **Lord Carlile of Berriew (Crossbench):** ... I ask ... whether [the Minister] agrees that the actions of online entities such as Channel3Now in Pakistan, allowing online advertising sites to make money by purveying violent, demonstrably deliberate untruths about the country we live in, is wholly unacceptable. ...

Lord Hanson of Flint: ... Much of the content that fired the organisation of some of the events we saw, not just in Southport but across the whole United Kingdom, began its life in an internet or social media post that encouraged poor behaviour, not just in the UK but, as the noble Lord said, outside the United Kingdom.

The Online Safety Act was passed by both Houses in the last Parliament and was the child of the previous Government. The level of implementation of some of the measures in that Act needs to be looked at. ...

Lord Reid of Cardowan (Labour): ... There is no doubt in my mind that there are deep

underlying causes to what we saw. The Minister mentioned online social media. I believe they are instrumental but not the underlying causes. In my view, the underlying causes lie in the poisoned chalice that the Government have been given of apparently unlimited immigration, huge reductions in public services and the language used for the past 10 years describing immigrants as “dangerous aliens” whether they are legal or illegal immigrants. ...

col 1079 Lord Hanson of Flint: ... In my view, immigration falls into three or four categories: immigration for everyone from the centre forward of a football team through to a professor or somebody else coming to this country because they are an expert in their field and bringing a contribution to the growth of our economy, versus people coming on a boat seeking asylum or people coming here completely illegally. The debate needs to be put into the context of how we manage that. We need to detoxify the debate to ensure that we deal with asylum and speed up asylum claims; deal with people who have come here illegally, because we must have integrity in the migration system; and make sure that, in doing that, we do not turn away people who will help us grow our economy or bring skills and challenges to our society. ...

col 1080 Lord Hogan-Howe (Crossbench): ... I ask the Minister to consider two big issues in the review that he mentioned. First, there was clearly a lack of intelligence at times about the groups involved—what they were planning and how many would turn up. Sometimes over the last few years it has become difficult to use some of the most intrusive surveillance gathering against political extremists. We understand why—obviously, political parties should not be targeted in that way—but, where politics veers into violence, that is a different matter altogether. ...

The second area that the review might consider is the number of officers that can be mobilised together quickly and in large numbers. It was mentioned that by the time that the riots started to subside, around 4,000 officers were being deployed. This sounds like a lot, but when you consider that in Notting Hill recently—where two murders sadly occurred—7,000 officers were deployed in about half a square mile, and that the riots of 2011 were only subdued when 16,000 officers were patrolling the streets of this city ...

Lord Hanson of Flint: ... It is important to note that on Saturday 10 August, 6,675 officers were deployed in a single day to hold back criminal riotous behaviour. ...

The extremely important point was made that intelligence-led policing is absolutely vital to ensure that we get ahead of what is happening. That means using important—but difficult and challenging—tactics which involve looking at social media posts, tracking and looking at the capability of potential offenders and advising forces on how to deal with them in potential hotspots. ...

col 1081 Lord Caine (Conservative): ... Will the Minister ... join me in condemning those who immediately sought to exploit the appalling violence that took place in Harehills for their own political ends, using language that was designed only to stoke division and tension within that community, and did so from the luxury of Milwaukee? I refer, of course, to the leader of Reform UK.

Lord Hanson of Flint: ... The Member for Clacton, if that was the Member he was referring to, is responsible for his own comments, in his own way and in his own time. ... If, underneath that, there are long-term trends of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, right-wing ideology or, indeed, extreme left-wing ideology, we need to look, in a cold, calm way, at what has caused that, how we deal with it, how ... we intelligently police it and, ultimately, how we bring people to court if they have committed criminal offences. ...

Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated): ... I want to know whether there is any ministerial concern about the many free speech and civil liberties organisations around the world expressing shock about the degree of state-backed censorship being greenlighted in the wake of the riots. ... The majority of people have not been incarcerated for

incitement. They may have put out bigoted memes that we can deplore; none the less, people in the UK are being imprisoned not for what they do but for what they say. As there seem to be threats of more censorship, I want the Minister to reassure me that we will not end up in a situation where these riots, which were tragic enough, will chill legitimate debate and lead to a censorious, authoritarian atmosphere where people are frightened to speak freely.

col 1082 **Lord Hanson of Flint:** There is freedom of speech, and I made it very clear in the wake of the riots that people are entitled to criticise the UK Government's asylum policy, immigration policy or any aspect of UK government policy. What they are not entitled to do is to incite racial hatred, to incite criminal activity, to incite attacks on mosques or to incite burnings or other criminal, riotous behaviour. That is the threshold. The threshold is not me saying, "I do not like what they have said" ... the threshold is determined by criminal law, is examined by the police and is referred to the CPS. ...

Lord Brown of Ladyton (Labour): ... the Minister will be aware of the analysis by the European Consortium for Political Research ... The correlation between the location of violence and the incidence of child poverty in any area was significantly greater than the correlation between rioting and the presence of any of the other, many factors that people have attributed the violence to. ...

Lord Hanson of Flint: ... the Home Office, via the Deputy Prime Minister and her department, wishes to look at some of the wider issues of social deprivation that may or may not have contributed to these riots. However ... we still have to focus on the points that were made in this debate: irrespective of social conditions in a particular area, scapegoating and attacking citizens or individuals who have in many cases no relationship to those causes is simply not acceptable, so they have to face the law. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-09-03/debates/0EA031F6-6557-48DD-93AD-B7EABA1F68B4/ViolentDisorder>

The analysis referred to above by Lord Brown of Ladyton can be read at
<https://theloop.ecpr.eu/what-caused-the-riots-in-britain/>

Scottish Parliament Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Community Cohesion

The First Minister (John Swinney): During the summer recess, everyone was affected by the dreadful, tragic deaths of three girls in Southport. ...

My thoughts have been with the community of Southport which, while facing that unthinkable tragedy, then faced further distress. Starting in Southport, sparked by false information and rumour on social media as to the identity and background of the perpetrator of the attack, communities in England and Northern Ireland were then made to endure disorder and rioting, on top of their grief and concern for those affected. ...

Let me be clear: that activity was not and should not be classed as protest. It was violence and thuggery, pure and simple, perpetrated by those with a far-right ideology, by those who were taken in by that rhetoric and by criminals. Far from having legitimate concerns, those who were indulging in those mindless acts were doing so from a place of racism, Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. That cannot and should not be tolerated anywhere. It is absolutely unacceptable for anyone to live in fear of leaving their home, to feel nervous about sending their children to school or to be afraid to use certain services or transport. Justice has been done in the English courts, with sentences reflecting the serious criminality that was perpetrated.

To date, Scotland has not had to deal with incidents of a similar nature, despite the

attempts to organise them via social media, but we must continue to be vigilant against ideologies that can lead to such violence. We cannot take the view that we may be immune from related disorder occurring on our doorsteps. ...

We should rightly be proud of our history as a nation that values free speech and welcomes those who want to live and work here. We can be proud that, as a society, we celebrate, value and protect diversity in our communities. However, we must challenge those who would deny those values. We must guard against the prejudice, discrimination and misinformation that aim to incite hatred and violence. We must remember that those who seek to divide us are in a very small minority...

While we watched the violence unfold in communities and heard about how social media was being used to whip up the disorder and violence that several towns witnessed over some nights in August, we also saw many more people and communities come together to express how that was not reflective of their towns. We saw many more people work together to clean up the mess and damage in their neighbourhoods. We can also all take heart that, on 10 August, thousands of people took to the streets across the UK to protest against the racist thuggery and anti-immigrant rhetoric that they had witnessed—far more people than had taken part in the disorder itself.

Our relationships with our diverse communities are crucial to community cohesion, and I know that many people felt scared or uneasy in those early days of August. Violence, prejudice, racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism have no place in our society, and nobody should ever be subjected to them. I want to reassure everyone who was impacted that this Government will always work to ensure that every person living in Scotland is protected and that we are united in our opposition to anyone who would seek to use disorder as a means of division.

In the first week of August, I attended the Edinburgh central mosque, and, at my invitation, faith leaders came together as well. That provided an opportunity for us all to make clear that conflict and hatred have no place here. Faith leaders from across Scotland continue to promote mutual respect and share a common desire for everybody to be safe in our society. ...

Let me be absolutely clear to anyone in Scotland who is considering mimicking the kind of vile behaviour that we have witnessed in parts of England and Northern Ireland this summer that their actions will not be tolerated, they will be dealt with robustly and criminal actions online will be taken just as seriously. ...

Following the tragic events in Southport, social media was a key factor in the first incident of disorder that then took place. ...

Although we all have an individual duty to question whether everything that we read online is actually true, it is very clear to me that the major organisations behind the platforms also have a duty—both moral and legal—to take action to ensure that individuals in our society are not subjected to hate and threatening behaviour and that communities are protected from violence.

I wrote to the main social media companies, asking them to promptly outline the decisive steps that they plan to take on the matter, and we have engaged constructively with the United Kingdom Government on this question. Social media companies have assured me that safety teams have been working to detect any associated violation of their terms of service and that they have taken action, including account suspension and content removal. However, recent events suggest that there is much more work to do to ensure that hateful content and misinformation do not proliferate.

I want to conclude by emphasising to anyone who feels fearful of being targeted for who they are or what they believe that we stand in solidarity with them. Scotland is a diverse, multicultural society where everyone is welcome, and I want us to be united in our opposition to anyone who would seek to use disorder and violence to divide people. ...

Douglas Ross (Conservative): ... I say unequivocally that everyone, regardless of faith, race and background, in Scotland and across the UK, deserves to feel safe. Violence has

no place in our society. The rioting and attacks that we saw in UK cities over the summer were both tragic and deeply alarming. Although it is welcome that such events have not occurred in Scotland, we cannot be complacent and deceive ourselves that they could never happen here. We have to be prepared. ...

However, in the past three years, police officer numbers in Scotland have fallen by 1,000. David Threadgold, the chair of the Scottish Police Federation, has said that “the service simply cannot recruit the number of officers it needs to replace those who are leaving.” ... What action is the Government taking, therefore, to halt the reduction in the number of police officers across Scotland? ...

Finally, the Home Secretary announced yesterday that the UK Government will review its counter-extremism strategy. What discussions has the First Minister had with the UK Government about that work?

The First Minister: Police numbers are growing as a consequence of the very significant recruitment efforts by Police Scotland that are now under way, and we expect the numbers to rise in the period ahead. Police capacity has been adequate and appropriate to deal with the challenges that we face. ...

In relation to the work of the United Kingdom Government on terrorism measures, obviously we remain in regular discussion with the UK Government on those questions, and we expect to take forward those discussions in the period ahead, as the UK Government forms its steps.

Mr Ross will be aware that we have taken a slightly different approach to the handling of the communication of these issues in Scotland in the past, which has been built on building community confidence in anti-terror measures. I have a great deal of confidence in that, and I think that, most importantly, the communities of Scotland have confidence in those measures ...

Anas Sarwar (Labour): ... I praise the UK Government’s response, which was strong, swift and appropriate. I also thank the Scottish Government and the police here in Scotland for the tone of their response in order to minimise the risk of disorder. ...

We will not allow the acts of a mindless few to speak for the vast majority of people in this country who believe in the principles of peace, tolerance and love.

Sadly, there are people who seek to divide our communities. Much of that is amplified by reckless politicians who are only interested in their own divisive agendas, and we have to call them out for what they are. However, greater responsibility must be borne by the social media companies that allow their platforms to be used as vehicles to amplify, to recruit, to organise and to fundraise.

There is also, of course, people’s individual responsibility to make sure that they are not deliberately or inadvertently sharing misinformation. ...

The First Minister: ... There is a responsibility on us all with regard to what we say and what we do on social media, as well as with regard to whether we believe what we see on social media, but there is also a huge obligation on those companies in that regard. The United Kingdom Government has been making those obligations pretty clear to social media companies. Ofcom has also been doing that—its statements at the height of the difficulties were very clear about the obligation of those companies to operate within the code of responsibility. ...

We cannot pause for a moment in any way, shape or form relax our rejection of far-right ideology. We have to stand together and be persistent and assertive about setting out that that represents the wrong agenda for our country, that we believe in the importance of diverse, multicultural communities and that we believe in the importance of bringing people together. ...

Patrick Harvie (Green): ... although I welcome a lot of what was in the First Minister’s statement, I suggest that two things were missing from it. First, it is not only social media that is responsible for the promotion and proliferation of hatred and prejudice against immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims. Those attitudes have also been deliberately

cultivated by swathes of the UK mainstream media and by successive UK Governments. Politicians from a number of different parties are culpable for that.

Secondly, it is when social and community cohesion is already weakened that the far right finds its opportunity. ...

The First Minister: ... Many comments have been made in the mainstream media and by politicians that I would never want to be associated with, because they represent an ideology that I find repugnant. However, I accept that that is a reality, which is why it is important that we exercise political leadership in Scotland, that we reject that ideology and that we reject it across the Parliament. ... I will do everything that I can as First Minister to foster a climate that enables that to be the case, because I want this Parliament to speak as one in saying that the far-right ideology of racism or hate has absolutely no place in our society whatsoever. ...

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Liberal Democrat): ... When those murders happened, the four nations of these islands fell silent, but that silence was broken by the brutal thuggery that we saw on the streets of England. I was astonished—I am sure that members shared my astonishment—that some of the youngest perpetrators of the lawlessness were as young as 11 years old. Nobody is born racist but, as the First Minister said, many people in our society are becoming more susceptible to rhetoric and online misinformation. When it comes to young people of that age, it strikes me that, as a state, we have a role to play in countering that. What steps is the First Minister's Government taking to work with education authorities to ensure that we counter, right at the heart of our school system, that level of misinformation and rhetoric?

The First Minister: ... the ethos of curriculum for excellence, which is the curriculum in our schools ... is to create responsible citizens. That aspiration runs right through our approach to our three-to-18 curriculum...

On the specific incidents over the summer, the chief inspector of education wrote to all local authorities to convey guidance and educational materials that the school system could use when pupils returned in August. ...

Evelyn Tweed (SNP): ... Will the First Minister further outline what action needs to be taken to ensure that websites such as X, Meta and TikTok combat the spread of misinformation and address racist and hateful material on their platforms? Have social media platforms provided reassurance?

The First Minister: I have been in touch with social media companies, and I have had responses from some of them about the steps that they take. They provided some degree of assurance about material that is taken down, but I do not think that that goes nearly far enough. It is quite easy to view material online that I consider to be completely and utterly repugnant and unacceptable.

Ofcom has strict and clear guidelines in place, but my sense is that those are not being respected by social media companies. We will engage in dialogue with the UK Government to ensure that whatever strengthening is required is undertaken. Social media companies have a responsibility to exercise their duties, and they could exercise them this minute to protect communities from being exposed to unacceptable material.

Russell Findlay (Conservative): ... We all have a duty to stand up to bigotry and racism in all its forms, and it is important to recognise that the response to the riots showed the overwhelming tolerance and decency of people across the UK. ...

Will the First Minister tell us what he considers to be the minimum number of officers required to keep our communities safe?

The First Minister: Obviously, the number of police officers is an operational matter for the chief constable, but there are discussions between the Government, the chief constable and the Scottish Police Authority about such matters. ...

Rona Mackay (SNP): It is vital that we do all that we can to reach out to our faith and migrant communities and offer solidarity, support and reassurance that they enrich the

social and cultural fabric of our nation. With that in mind, will the First Minister provide further detail on the work that is being supported to promote community cohesion across the country?

The First Minister: A great deal of work is under way in that respect through dialogue with stakeholder organisations who are well connected within communities. The justice secretary and I visited the Edinburgh central mosque during the incident and it was reassuring to hear the comments that were being made by members of the Muslim community about their relationship with the police and the dialogue that takes place.

I had my own experience of that when I visited a synagogue in East Renfrewshire and I met the Jewish community and heard similarly their appreciation of the assurance of their safety that was undertaken, although they highlighted to me the fact that, at times, they feel very unsafe and fearful. ...

Katy Clark (Labour): Does the First Minister agree that the rise of the far right is a problem across the UK, with many in society feeling alienated and disenfranchised? ...

The First Minister: ... We have to give relentless political leadership on the value and inclusivity of our communities and not allow anything at all to get in the way of our unity on that point. ...

Pam Gosal (Conservative): Scotland was not exempt from the turmoil that occurred last month. Although no riots broke out in Scotland, ethnic minority constituents in my region contacted me to say that they felt unsafe—so unsafe that they decided to stay at home or close their businesses until tensions calmed. What action is the First Minister taking to build community cohesion, not just between civil servants and community leaders but between members of the community? ...

The First Minister: It is important that we encourage and enable the cohesion of communities. Some of that comes about by political leadership, some comes about by community work and some by the active investment in social and economic priorities in the Government's programme and the programme of local authorities. ... It is unacceptable that somebody has to close their business because they are fearful of being attacked ... Police Scotland is prepared to be visible and active to protect people, and it has done so. ...

To read the full transcript see

https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-03-09-2024?meeting=15967&iob=136319#orscontributions_M2098E385P721C2606766

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Israel

House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Middle East Update

[The Foreign Secretary's statement to the House of Commons](#) was read in the Lords.

col 1063 Lord Callanan (Conservative): My Lords, I thank the Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Government for the Statement yesterday, but I found their position deeply disappointing. The Foreign Secretary produced no evidence that Israel is in fact breaching humanitarian law as it goes about its legitimate right of self-defence following the barbaric Hamas attack. To announce this on the day that funerals were taking place for the latest six hostages who were brutally executed by Hamas shows a profound sense of doing something at the wrong time.

The Government have decided to suspend less than 10% of the arms export licences and the UK supplies only about 1% of Israel's defence equipment, so it is clear that, thankfully, this decision will have no material impact on Israel's ongoing military operations. However, the process of doing this has caused a rift with our US allies and has alienated no less a person than the Chief Rabbi, as well as many other western Governments.

The Government now found themselves in a strange position. Only a matter of weeks ago, the Royal Air Force helped to shoot down Iranian missiles aimed at Israel, but they are now revoking some of the export licences that allow Israel to obtain the equipment to defend itself from those same missile attacks. It is clear to me that the reasoning behind this shameful announcement is nothing to do with humanitarian law and everything to do with appeasing a vocal, left-wing, pro-Hamas minority which resides, unfortunately, on Labour's Back Benches in the House of Commons.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, I welcome the Government's decision in the Statement. I consider it balanced and welcome not only the Statement but the summary that was published. It means that this Government are aligned with the previous measured decision taken in 2014 to ensure that the United Kingdom does not issue licences where there is a valid concern about potential breaches of international humanitarian law. ...

col 1064 However, can the Minister confirm that this position is not final and that the process is dynamic? The Statement relates specifically to the IDF, and I note and share the Government's view that nothing in these measures puts at risk Israel's right to self-defence as an independent state and ally of the United Kingdom. Concerns have been raised, both by the United Kingdom Government and previously by the United States State Department review, about other elements of the Israeli Government. Some actions have included using civilian matériel to bulldoze civilian areas in Gaza to make them uninhabitable. This is a breach of an occupying power's responsibilities. Some of this equipment was manufactured in the United Kingdom.

These Benches agree that much more needs to be done now to ensure that life-saving aid is provided to Gaza. The latest reports by United Nations OCHA for August have reported that only 69 trucks—not the minimum of 500 a day—are getting into Gaza. Some of this is obviously the responsibility of Hamas, which needs to be roundly condemned for preventing aid being distributed through its disruption, but there is also responsibility on the Israeli Government to ensure that there are no unnecessary blockages. ...

It has also been profoundly depressing that Hamas has prevented the International Committee of the Red Cross having access to those who have been hostages. But it also must be of concern that, as has been raised, the Israeli Government have refused access by the ICRC to places of detention for Palestinian prisoners. ...

The situation in the West Bank is obviously of great concern, and the Statement highlights that. There have been 150 Palestinian children killed in the West Bank, and we have now seen the expansion of outposts. ... Will the Government consider the widening of the very welcome sanctions against settlers to those who are providing facilitation, empowerment and financing for the expansion of outposts? ...

Finally, I share with many the terrible horror of the families of those who have been hostages. The news over the weekend was devastating. I met Rachel Goldberg-Polin during my visit to the region in February. Her humanity and that of her family were profound, and anyone who watched her eulogy at Hersh's funeral will have seen that. ... What actions are the Government taking with our allies to ensure that any ceasefire agreement can be brought about speedily to ensure that those remaining hostages are released and the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank can come to an end?

col 1065 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Baroness Chapman of Darlington):** ... This Government are completely committed to upholding international law. On day one

in office, the Foreign Secretary commissioned a thorough review into Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law, given the grave concerns about the conduct and consequences of the war in Gaza for civilians. The UK's robust export licensing criteria state that the Government will "not issue export licences if there is a clear risk"—not if this has happened, but if there is a risk—"that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law". On completion of that review, this Government concluded that a clear risk did exist. This means that, under the criteria, we are required to suspend certain export licences for items that could be used in the current conflict in Gaza.

This decision is none the less a matter of deep regret. Alongside our allies, we have repeatedly communicated to the Israeli Government our concerns regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and that review found that those concerns had not been addressed. We are, remain, and will always be, fully committed to Israel's security against threats from Iran and other regional actors. ...

Lord Turnberg (Labour): My Lords, the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons is very difficult to discern if you are in a war zone and in a country facing thousands of rockets every day from Hezbollah, such that you have had to evacuate 60,000 of your citizens from the north and from around Gaza. You begin to wonder why Britain is stopping this rather small amount of arms being delivered, in what is a major propaganda coup for Israel's enemies. Is it not perverse that, at a time when Britain says it will defend Israel against attack by Iran, it is also limiting Israel's ability to defend itself? It is irrational—and is it not wrong?

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: My Lords, it is not irrational because it is about complying with international law and our own commitments. The UK remains fully committed to Israel's security against threats. ...

The Lord Bishop of Gloucester: ... I am very concerned that, as has been said by the noble Lord, Lord Purvis, we do not lose sight of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank.

col 1066 I had the painful privilege of visiting there very recently and I was deeply perturbed, not least by the growing settler activity and, as has been said, the illegal settler outposts, including the abhorrent attack and subsequent dispossession of the Kissieh family of Palestinian Christians near Bethlehem. Will the Government take action on this as well as on the issue of arms licences?

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: My Lords, the situation in Gaza is horrifying and we are all appalled by the scale of civilian casualties. ... Our priority remains achieving a ceasefire in Gaza that will see the hostages released.

The UK is also deeply concerned by the ongoing IDF military operation in the occupied West Bank, while recognising Israel's need to defend itself against security threats. We are deeply worried by the methods that have been deployed and by reports of casualties and the destruction of infrastructure.

Lord Pannick (Crossbench): My Lords, will the Minister address one of the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Callanan, in his compelling observations? If it is really necessary and appropriate to make a gesture of this sort—and it is no more than a gesture—is it not remarkably insensitive and, indeed, insulting to our democratic ally to do so on the very day when Israel is burying hostages who were detained for 11 months in appalling conditions and then brutally murdered in cold blood by Hamas?

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The noble Lord is right in what he says about the brutal murder in cold blood by Hamas, and we deplore it. The timing of this was purely a consequence of the legal process that the Foreign Secretary completed, yesterday being the first day that Parliament sat. He was obliged to report his decision to Parliament at the earliest opportunity.

Lord Gold (Conservative): My Lords, why do His Majesty's Government not understand that imposing an arms embargo on Israel plays into Hamas's hands? Indeed, as has just

been said, announcing this on the day when it was discovered that six Israeli hostages had been brutally murdered shows the Government's total insensitivity and lack of care for the democratic state they claim to befriend. This follows the Government's wholly wrong withdrawal of their challenge to the decision of the ICC to issue a warrant for the arrest of the Israeli Prime Minister and their restoration of funding to UNRWA even though UNRWA employees took part in the 7 October massacre. All this is a powerful message to Hamas that that its terrorism will be rewarded. ...

col 1067 **Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** I should make it clear to the noble Lord that this is not, as he suggests, an embargo. It is a restriction on a very small number of pieces of equipment and it is in order for us to comply with international law. ...

Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat): I am sure that the Minister is aware that on 16 August an FCDO official, Mark Smith, resigned on the basis that: "Ministers claim that the UK has one of the most 'robust and transparent' arms export licensing regimes in the world, however this is the opposite of the truth".

He went on to say: "To export arms to any nation, the UK must be satisfied that the recipient nation has in place robust procedures to avoid civilian casualties and to minimize harm to civilian life. It is impossible to argue that Israel is doing that".

... can we be reassured that the Government will apply the rules without fear or favour as to the country in question?

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: ... she can be assured ... I invite her to read the summary that we published yesterday alongside the Statement.

Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): We are of course all totally appalled by the scale of civilian casualties. The question is, what is the real cause? Is it, as Israel says, Hamas having dug itself into civilian areas—schools, hospitals and so on—or is it the huge amount of weaponry Israel has used, such as 2,000 lb bombs with a killing range of 800 metres? ... As soon as there is a permanent ceasefire, will the Minister consider encouraging the UN to set up a fact-finding mission in order that we get a more balanced view of what has been happening on the ground? ...

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The discovery of the truth in these situations can take many forms. ...

Lord Deben (Conservative): Will not the Minister accept that it is crucial for the future of Israel that international law be upheld? We stand by Israel because she is a country guaranteed by international law. That means that we in this country have to make sure that we uphold international law ... It is also important to remind Israel that international law defines the boundaries of Israel and that there are actions that undermine international law. ...

col 1068 **Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** The noble Lord is completely right in what he says about international law. ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Conservative): ... I think I speak for the whole House, and for anyone who has met with the hostage families, in recognising the nature of their pain and suffering, and likewise, as one of those who have visited the region, in recognising the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza. Many innocent lives have been lost in this conflict, and the first casualty of war, as we know, is truth. In pursuit of peace, could the Minister update your Lordships' House on the specifics of the negotiations that Qatar and Egypt have been conducting together with the United States? Ultimately, these are what are needed to deliver an end to this conflict. Also, for the medium and long-term security of Israel and the future state of Palestine, a solution must be worked in phases, starting with a ceasefire in Gaza.

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The suggestion of an update on negotiations may well be helpful. It is not something that I am in a position to provide now ...

Baroness Foster of Oxtou (Conservative): ... I do not believe the action taken by this Government has anything to do with international law. We see Hamas carrying out war

crimes on a daily basis. Does the Minister agree with me that trying to defend the indefensible will not wash with the majority of people in this country?

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: I will let the people of this country decide what will wash and what will not wash with them. This is not the indefensible. This is sticking to, adhering to, international law. It is as simple as that. ...

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative): Can I ask the Minister to what degree she thinks this announcement will persuade Hamas to stop sacrificing its own people in its genocidal quest to eradicate Israel and, indeed, wipe it off the face of the earth?

col 1069 **Baroness Chapman of Darlington:** We repeatedly, wholeheartedly and consistently condemn the actions of Hamas. Hamas is not the Palestinian people. It is an organisation that has taken children and murdered children. There is nothing more that we can say that we have not already said that can more strongly convey our view or condemn the actions of Hamas.

Lord Polak (Conservative): My Lords, I refer the House to my registered interests. In his Statement, the Foreign Secretary—using interesting English—said: “This Government are not an international court. We have not, and could not, arbitrate on whether or not Israel has breached international humanitarian law. This is a forward-looking evaluation”—whatever that means—“not a determination of innocence or guilt”.

I am not a lawyer ... but, as a result of “Perhaps/maybe Israel is doing this”, the Government have made decisions on stopping these licences. Could the Minister explain how they can make that decision based on “perhaps/maybe”?

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: Perhaps, unfortunately, the law requires that that is what we do. The law does not require us to assess whether international humanitarian law has been broken; the test laid down in legislation in this country is about the risk that the equipment we are selling may be used to break it. That is the legal test, and this Government stick to the law.

Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated): My Lords, does the Minister understand that one of the concerns is that Israel is treated differently and held to a higher standard than any other country in the world? I am delighted to hear that international law is all-seeing and so on, but I have noted how many arms sales there have been to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Is the Minister really telling me that, every time David Lammy and his lawyers have looked at it, they have said: “My goodness, Yemen is an absolute haven of peace, and no humanitarian law has been broken”? ... it feels disingenuous and as though Israel is being punished, pointed at, demonised and told that it is in breach of humanitarian law. It is not—no matter what you say—it is defending itself. It is being punished morally, even if the amount of arms does not really matter.

Baroness Chapman of Darlington: This is not about punishing Israel. Israel is our ally, and we support it and support its right to defend itself. This decision is consistent with the law we are obliged to follow. I understand, of course, the point about Israel not wishing to be treated differently. That is why the tone of the Statement yesterday was as it was. That is why we are clear that this decision is limited; it is not an embargo and is made with regret.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-09-03/debates/9BD8C786-8AFB-484E-AF88-D353419E2004/MiddleEastUpdate>

The Summary referred to above by Baroness Chapman of Darlington can be read at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summary-of-the-international-humanitarian-law-ihl-process-decision-and-the-factors-taken-into-account/summary-of-the-ihl-process-decision-and-the-factors-taken-into-account>

The Statement referred to above by Baroness Chapman of Darlington can be read at
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-09-02/debates/24090222000013/ExportsToIsraelMilitaryOperationsInGaza>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Ayoub Khan (Independent) [133] Human rights in Palestine – That this House notes that, according to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood; further notes that the Right to Return is an inalienable human right under Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; also notes that, according to UN General Assembly Resolution 32/40B of 2 December 1977, Israel has an obligation to facilitate the return of Palestinians to their homes in line with Articles 1 and 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but has always blocked the Palestinian Right of Return; notes that, for Articles 1 and 13 and Resolution 32/40B of 2 December 1977 to be upheld, Palestinian refugees must be allowed to return to their homes and all the lands from which they have been expelled in the ethnic cleansing that has taken place before and since the state of Israel was established in 1948; and calls on the Government to fully uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by demanding Israel ceases its genocide in Palestine and upholds the inalienable human rights of the Palestinian People, including their right to return to all the lands from which they have been expelled before and since the establishment of Israel in 1948.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/62454>

Scottish Government FoI Release

Correspondence between the First Minister and Scottish Government officials/advisers relating to Gaza and/or Palestine

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202400416169/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/2p8xzbcm>

United Nations

Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

... It is clear to [the Secretary-General] that the polio pauses are a rare ray of hope and humanity in the cascade of horror that we have seen in Gaza. ...

This coordinated action is a contrast to what Gaza has endured since the acts of terror unleashed by Hamas in Israel on 7 October, Mr. Guterres said. Gaza has become synonymous with relentless bloodshed — most recently the killing of six hostages, which the Secretary-General utterly condemned. ...

The Secretary-General reiterates his call for the immediate release of all hostages and an immediate ceasefire.

If the parties can act to protect children from a deadly virus, he said, surely, they can and must act to protect children and all innocents from the horrors of war. ...

Aside from the local pauses, our OCHA colleagues say that Israeli bombardments, ground operations and heavy fighting continue in multiple areas, resulting in further civilian casualties, displacement and destruction of houses and other civilian infrastructure.

As we have flagged repeatedly here, Palestinian families continue to flee and find themselves in overcrowded areas with inhumane living conditions, which, coupled with the lack of clean water, sanitation facilities and basic hygiene items, contribute to the spread of diseases — polio being one of them, of course.

We also want to reiterate that parties must always respect international humanitarian law. This means that civilians must be protected, and their essential needs — including

food, including shelter, including water and including health — must be met, wherever they may be in Gaza.

Meanwhile, our local partners, in collaboration with the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), have been able to repair the main water transmission line running from Israel to Khan Younis, which was damaged during recent military operations. This has led to the partial restoration of water services in several areas ...

With the first rainfall of the season experienced over the past weekend, our humanitarian colleagues warn that over one third of the population in Gaza is living in flood-prone areas. ...

Moving on to the West Bank, OCHA warns of the continued use of lethal war-like tactics by Israeli forces, including air strikes, with people being killed, injured and displaced or deprived of access to basic services. Operations have now resumed in Tulkarm, while they’re also continuing in Jenin. We’ve recorded more than two dozen fatalities over the past week, including children.

Today, multiple organizations mobilized by OCHA were set to carry out an assessment mission in Jenin but were denied access by Israeli security forces. ... the movement of ambulances and the movement of medical teams has been impeded and delayed since the onset of the now week-long military operation by Israeli forces in the West Bank. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/db240903.doc.htm>

UN Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO)

Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on the situation in the Gaza Strip

Today, I returned to Gaza and witnessed firsthand the catastrophic impact of the hostilities. The scale of destruction is immense, the humanitarian needs are colossal and soaring, and civilians continue to bear the brunt of this conflict. I unequivocally condemn the horrifying civilian death toll in Gaza.

During my visit, I met with the heads of UN agencies and our dedicated staff working tirelessly in extremely challenging conditions. Their commitment and bravery in providing critical support to those in need is truly commendable.

I also had the opportunity to visit a Polio vaccination center. Its reemergence represents yet another threat to the children in the Gaza Strip. I welcome the humanitarian pauses to allow for the vaccination campaigns to take place.

Every day that passes puts more lives in danger. On this note, I condemn the tragic killing of six hostages in Gaza by Palestinian armed groups. I reiterate my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and urge all sides to reach an agreement that will bring about an immediate release of all hostages and a humanitarian ceasefire.

I continue to be engaged with all stakeholders towards these objectives. A deal is crucial to saving lives, reducing regional tensions and enabling the UN, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, to accelerate efforts to address the pressing needs of Gaza’s population.

The ongoing conflict has destroyed the lives of countless families. It must stop.

<https://unsco.unmissions.org/statement-un-special-coordinator-middle-east-peace-process-tor-wennesland-situation-gaza-strip-3>

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Other Relevant Information

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Antisemitism is a scourge on our collective humanity: High Commissioner Volker Türk

Antisemitism is a scourge on our collective humanity.

It has left deep scars that are hard to heal. But we can – and must – learn from them.

Both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been nourished by this imperative: to learn how to overcome the hatred and ignorance that drive violence, destruction and dehumanization.

And yet, today, antisemitism still plagues our world – with damaging consequences for individuals and communities. ...

Already last November, I deplored the sharp rise in cases of antisemitism – and also Islamophobia and vicious hate speech – since 7 October 2023.

People have been attacked. Lives have been threatened.

Homes and religious buildings have been defaced with messages meant to frighten and provoke hate.

Inflammatory and toxic rhetoric has been used by irresponsible political leaders.

And the flood of hateful language, including on social media, is never-ending, and abhorrent.

This is unacceptable, and we must tackle it together in all its forms. ...

But everyone has a role to play here – because Holocaust studies have highlighted how antisemitism is very often the canary in the coalmine.

It is imperative that states and other actors take steps to address it – as well as all forms of hate speech that weaponize our diversity of origins and beliefs.

International human rights law is a blueprint for effective action.

It requires prohibiting any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

To address the root causes, we must deliver the full protection of the law to all individuals and communities. ...

Political and religious leaders need to speak out firmly and promptly against all incitement to violence and hatred.

Digital platforms must enforce content moderation policies in accordance with international human rights standards.

They must have a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitism.

And they must listen to those most affected by online hate speech. ...

Antisemitism is not just an affront to Jewish communities; it is an assault on our collective humanity – breeding division, discrimination and violence.

We all have a duty to eliminate it.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/09/antisemitism-scourge-our-collective-humanity-high-commissioner>

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