



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Ministerial Statement

#### Faith School Designation Reforms

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan) [HCWS437]** Today, I wish to inform the House that we are consulting on faith designation reforms for new and existing free schools and special academies.

These reforms will build on our success in raising standards in our schools, with 90% of schools now rated “good” or “outstanding”, up from just 68% in 2010. A key driver of this progress has been our academies programme, which has put schools in the hands of education experts. Today, over half of state-funded schools are academies, totalling 10,839, compared with just 203 in 2010. High-quality multi-academy trusts are key to driving up education standards for pupils, teachers and leaders. The best trusts enable the most effective leaders to support a greater number of schools and deliver school improvement, by directing resources to where they are needed the most. This underpins our focus on continuing to improve standards in schools, providing the best education for children, including for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Church of England, the Catholic Church and other faith school providers are long-standing and valued partners of my Department and are a key part of our diverse school system, representing a third of all schools in England. Faith schools are judged “good” or

“outstanding” at a higher rate than the national average and are, as a consequence, very popular with parents. Helping more faith schools to join academy trusts and removing barriers to the creation of more faith school places is a critical next step in the Government’s plan to give every child a world-class education.

At the moment, the Government require admission authorities for a mainstream free school designated with a religious character to allocate at least 50% of its available places without reference to faith-based admission criteria, when oversubscribed. The original aim of that restriction was to promote a more inclusive intake in those schools. However, the evidence suggests that the 50% faith admissions cap has not achieved inclusivity. It has also worked against creating more good school places because some faith bodies, such as the Catholic Church and its dioceses, have felt unable to establish new free schools on this basis.

Our proposals will remove the cap and, by doing so, increase the number of good school places where there is demand from communities, ensuring parents have more choice over where they send their child to school. The application process for new free schools will continue to require applicants to consider how the school will promote cohesion, integration and tolerance in the school community. As already set in regulations, all schools—including free schools designated with a religious character— must promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs.

We are also consulting on changing our policy to allow special academies to be designated with a religious character. This will encourage high-quality faith school providers with a track record of high performance to consider applying to establish new special academies and free schools within their multi-academy trusts. This builds on our delivery of over 60,000 new places for children or young people with SEND or who require alternative provision, with a £2.6 billion package to improve SEND services between 2022 and 2025. Faith schools have a long and positive history of providing education and support to these children. There are 241 faith schools in England providing specialist units, which provide high-quality education and support for pupils with SEND. In addition, a number of faith providers have experience of delivering dedicated special schools in the independent sector, and through the provision of non-maintained special schools with a faith ethos and special academies with a faith ethos.

I think it is important to capitalise on all of the expertise in the special needs sector in order to meet the challenge of ensuring access to the right provision for every child. I want to ensure that all faith groups feel able to open special academies and provide high-quality places for pupils with complex special educational needs and disabilities, who would be admitted on the basis of their need, not their faith.

These proposals apply to England only and the consultation will run for seven weeks, closing on 20 June 2024. The consultation and the Government response will be published on gov.uk. We will also place a copy of the Government response in the Library of both Houses.

A consultation will allow my Department to capture and consider a wide range of views about how our proposals to change policy are likely to impact schools, local authorities, parents, children and young people. We will consider all responses to the consultation and use them to inform our proposals for better meeting the policy objectives of faith schools.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-01/debates/24050121000008/FaithSchoolDesignationReforms>

*The consultation referred to above can be read at*

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/faith-schools-policy-team/faith-school-designation-reforms/>

TOP

# Holocaust

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [711] Holocaust Memorial proposal** – That this House notes the First Special Report of the Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee, HC121, on the problems with the current proposal and the restrictions faced by the Committee considering the hybrid Bill; respects the conclusions and recommendations on page 20; agrees with the list of matters related to the current proposals for a Holocaust Memorial and believes these need updated attention on deliverability from the Infrastructure Commission, from the National Audit Office on likely capital costs and recurrent annual costs, from the Chancellor on future funding control, and from the police and security services on maintaining unfettered public access for use of Victoria Tower Gardens while protecting the Memorial; asks His Majesty's Government and the Holocaust Memorial Foundation agency to commission the views of the property consultants on a comparison of the current proposal by Sir David Adjaye in Victoria Tower Gardens with viable alternatives, to commission the full appraisal and to hold a public consultation on the selection of site; and further asks His Majesty's Government to commit to having this or an amended proposal considered first by the local planning authority before considering whether to call in the application, noting that an open-minded observer could doubt another minister in the Levelling Up department should be asked to make an independent decision on an application by the Secretary of State.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/62211>

*The report referred to above can be read at*

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44462/documents/221092/default/>

TOP

# Israel

## House of Commons Ministerial Statement

### UK-Israel Trade Negotiations

**The Minister for Trade Policy (Greg Hands) [HCWS436]** The fifth round of negotiations on the UK-Israel free trade agreement ran from 8 to 17 April 2024.

This round of negotiations was hosted by the UK and conducted in a hybrid manner: a delegation of Israeli officials travelled to London for in-person discussions, with further officials attending virtually. During this round, officials held technical text-based discussions covering 27 policy areas across 63 sessions.

This round of negotiations discussed a range of policy areas, with a particular focus on services, which are not covered by our current agreement. Services comprise around 80% of both the UK and Israel's economies but, because of our outdated trade agreement, services only make up just over one third of total trade between us. The trading relationship between the UK and Israel is valued at £6.4 billion as of September 2023, and there is significant room for growth. An upgraded trade deal will play to British strengths and unlock trade for our world-leading services and digital sectors.

The UK will maintain its long-standing foreign policy positions in this FTA, including with respect to the internationally recognised borders of Israel, and will continue to exclude illegal settlements to ensure nothing in this FTA undermines the viability of a two-state solution.

The Government remain clear that any deals we sign, including with Israel, will be in the

best interests of the British people and the UK economy. We will not compromise on our high environmental and labour protections, public health, animal welfare and food standards, and we will maintain our right to regulate in the public interest. We are also clear that during these negotiations the NHS, and the services it provides, is not on the table.

The Government will continue to keep Parliament updated as these negotiations progress.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-01/debates/24050121000006/UK-IsraelTradeNegotiations>

## House of Commons Oral Answers

### Prime Minister's Questions

**Stephen Flynn (SNP):** On Monday, the Armed Forces Minister could neither confirm nor deny that UK troops may soon be deployed on the ground in the middle east. The public watching will be hoping that Members of this House do not have a short memory when it comes to the potential deployment and involvement of our military in the middle east. Can I ask the Prime Minister to provide some much-needed clarity: is he giving active consideration to the deployment of UK forces in the middle east—yes or no?

**The Prime Minister:** ... you would not expect me to get into any operational planning details, but what I will say is that we are absolutely committed to supporting international effort to get more humanitarian aid into Gaza, which I think the whole House would support, by land, sea and air. We have tripled our aid commitment, and right now—together with the US, Cyprus and other partners—we are setting up a new temporary pier off the coast of Gaza to get aid in as securely and quickly as possible.

**Stephen Flynn:** Let us all be in no doubt: aid is required in Gaza, and it is required because, when people are not being bombed, they are starving to death. The solution to that is a ceasefire and the opening of safe ground aid routes, not the involvement on the ground of UK military personnel. These are dramatic and potentially dangerous developments, so will the Prime Minister confirm to the House today that, before he makes a decision, all Members will be afforded a vote?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not going to apologise for our armed forces playing a leading role in supporting international effort to get more aid in. Indeed, we are sending Royal Navy support ship RFA Cardigan Bay to the region to support that effort. The right hon. Gentleman talks about this conflict; the fastest way to end it is to ensure that we have a hostage deal that gets hostages out and aid in, and for there to be a sustainable pause in the fighting. It seems clear that there now is a workable offer on the table, so I hope he joins me in encouraging all parties, including Hamas, to accept that deal so we can move towards a sustainable solution.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-01/debates/070F3144-39CF-4114-BC8F-F558122217F1/Engagements#contribution-86045A1E-C1CC-4456-88D3-13003865B90E>

### Prime Minister's Questions

**Caroline Lucas (Green):** In February, the Foreign Secretary said that it would be difficult for a ground offensive on Rafah to avoid harming civilians and destroying homes, and just yesterday, the Deputy Foreign Secretary admitted that he was struggling to see how such an attack could be compliant with international humanitarian law. All the signs are that Netanyahu is about to defy the international community, and that an attack on the 1.5 million Palestinians sheltering in Rafah is imminent. If that attack begins, will that be the moment when the Prime Minister finally finds the moral backbone to ban arms exports to

Israel, and if not, how much more suffering has to happen before he acts to prevent further UK complicity in crimes against humanity?

**The Prime Minister;** What the hon. Lady did not acknowledge at all is that Israel suffered an appalling terrorist attack that killed hundreds of its citizens, and it does have the right to defend itself. Of course, as I have been crystal clear, we want to see humanitarian law respected and adhered to by all parties. Too many civilians have been killed, and we want to see Israel take greater care to avoid harming civilians. I have made these points repeatedly to Prime Minister Netanyahu, specifically about the impact of any military incursion into Rafah, and we continue to say to the Israelis at all levels that we want to see more aid going in, and bring about a hostage deal so that we can move towards a sustainable ceasefire.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-01/debates/070F3144-39CF-4114-BC8F-F558122217F1/Engagements#contribution-2310BF40-D2FD-4813-8D25-CFC3707CA7BE>

## House of Commons Written Answers

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### Israel: Palestinians

**Zarah Sultana (Labour)** [23319] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on deaths of Palestinians in Israeli custody since October 2023.

**Zarah Sultana (Labour)** [23320] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on reports of torture of Palestinians in Israeli custody.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We are aware of reports of ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees in military detention. The UK Government is clear that administrative detention should only be used when it is justified in accordance with international law. Those under detention should either be charged or released.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-23/23319>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-23/23320>

### UNRWA: Finance

**Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat)** [23790] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, with reference to the Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 22 April 2024, if he will resume funding to UNRWA.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the events that took place on 7 October in Israel are appalling, which is why we took decisive action to pause future funding to the organisation.

The Prime Minister has been clear that the UK will set out its position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report, UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation into these allegations.

We remain absolutely committed to getting humanitarian aid to people in Gaza who desperately need it. We more than trebled our support for the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the last financial year to over £100 million.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-25/23790>

*The Independent Review, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa\\_independent\\_review\\_on\\_neutrality.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf)

The UNRWA response to the Independent Review, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/independent-review-unrwa-adherence-humanitarian-principle-neutrality>

## House of Lords Oral Answers

### UK Armed Forces in Middle East

***The answer to a Commons urgent question was read in the Lords.***

... The Ministry of Defence has provided support to facilitate the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, and we continue to work with the FCDO. Our Armed Forces personnel have played a critical role in working to establish more routes for vital humanitarian aid to reach the people of Gaza and in the delivery of support, in co-ordination with the US and our international allies and partners. To date, the UK has conducted nine airdrops as part of the Jordanian-led mission, dropping more than 85 tonnes of vital humanitarian aid of pre-packaged halal meals, water, flour, baby milk formula and rice to Gaza.

UK military planners have been embedded with the US operational team to jointly develop the safest and most effective maritime humanitarian aid route. RFA 'Cardigan Bay' is sailing from Cyprus to support the US pier initiative to enable the delivery of significantly more life-saving aid into Gaza. The UK Hydrographic Office has also shared analysis of the Gazan shore with US planners to support the initiative. The RAF also sent additional aircraft to the region to protect our allies and support de-escalation, culminating in the UK Armed Forces shooting down a number of Iranian attack drones. ...

As stated by the Prime Minister on 15 April: 'Our aim is to support stability and security because that is right for the region, and because although the middle east is thousands of miles away, it has a direct effect on our security and prosperity at home, so we are working urgently with our allies to de-escalate the situation and prevent further bloodshed'.— [\[Official Report, Commons, 15/4/24; col. 23.\]](#) ...

**Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent (Labour):** ... I ask the Minister to update your Lordships' House on the new role of the RFA "Cardigan Bay" in helping to build the temporary pier on the Gaza Strip. How long is this deployment and what specific role will the UK play in the pier's construction? ...

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (The Earl of Minto):** ... We do all that to protect life, uphold the rules-based international order and secure UK interests against malign forces in the region. "Cardigan Bay" is providing living support for the American soldiers and sailors who are building the bridge. It lies off Gaza now in international waters, and will be there for as long as it takes.

**Baroness Smith of Newnham (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, can the noble Earl tell the House, first, whether the Government would give a parliamentary vote if there were to be boots on the ground? Secondly, what conversations have His Majesty's Government had with the Israeli Government about looking for appropriate ways of getting aid into Gaza and ensuring that those delivering that aid are protected, be they UNRWA or other charitable organisations?

**The Earl of Minto:** ... on the question of talking with the Israeli Government, we continue to press them on international aid to open up as many opportunities as we can to get a considerable amount of aid in. That includes via Ashdod, Erez and this new floating pontoon. It is extremely important to get as much aid in as we possibly can.

**Lord Robathan (Conservative):** My Lords, can my noble friend update us on the situation regarding the malign influence of Iran, which has of course recently attacked Israel? It has certainly armed Hamas in the past, whatever its situation now, and is almost certainly

controlling Hezbollah. ...

**The Earl of Minto:** My Lords, the diplomatic situation with Iran is that we are using every possible effort to quieten down what could have become an extremely dangerous situation. So far, that diplomacy does seem to be working. ...

**Baroness Goldie (Conservative):** My Lords, we should applaud the role of the RAF, with the recent contribution it made in the interception of Iranian drones launched against Israel. I ask my noble friend the Minister: was that under Operation Shader? If so, is the role of Shader now being expanded?

**The Earl of Minto:** ... It was indeed under Operation Shader, which has been in place since 2014. ... The RAF has flown nearly 9,000 missions under Operation Shader and released more than 4,000 precision weapons, which gives noble Lords an idea of the scale and importance of ensuring that Daesh in Iraq and Syria is ultimately destroyed. There is no intention to increase the scope of that operation, but back in April it was the appropriate asset to use for that particular sortie.

**Baroness Foster of Oxtou (Conservative):** ... I had concerns about some of the news that came out at the weekend that, in the project taking place in Gaza, we could end up looking at deploying British troops to be involved in the delivery of lorries on to the land. I would have great concerns about British troops being put into that position. We would not want to look as though we are condoning any of the Hamas actions that took place on 7 October; humanitarian aid is another issue. Could my noble friend give us reassurance that British troops will not be deployed inappropriately in this matter?

**The Earl of Minto:** My Lords, I can give an absolute assurance that that report was pure speculation. That is exactly where the situation remains.

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-01/debates/1FE7E6EA-7130-4131-9C53-25F072C9072D/UKArmedForcesInMiddleEast>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**The people of the West Bank and Gaza must be given the political horizon of a credible route to a Palestinian state: UK statement at the UN General Assembly**

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.

The people of the West Bank and Gaza must be given the political horizon 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 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 come 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 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's 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.

This is why the United Kingdom abstained on the Security Council resolution on the 18th of April. We must keep our focus on the immediate challenge facing innocent civilians right now. This means continuing to support a deal which would secure a pause in fighting, then making progress towards a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

President, my Foreign Secretary has spoken with the new Prime Minister of the Palestinian authority, Mohammad Mustafa, and offered the UK's support as his government implements much needed reforms. An effective Palestinian authority is vital for lasting peace and progress towards a two-state solution. And we are working urgently to scale up aid into Gaza, including having trebled our support to Occupied Palestinian Territories last financial year to over \$120 million.

We will continue to work urgently to help to 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/the-people-of-the-west-bank-and-gaza-must-be-given-the-political-horizon-of-a-credible-route-to-a-palestinian-state-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-c>

## Welsh Senedd Debate

### Gaza—A Welsh response

**563 Peredur Owen Griffiths (Plaid Cymru):** ... Our response was almost immediate, with statements made by all party leaders in this Chamber on 10 October, condemning the Hamas attack on 7 October and calling for the release of the hostages. Plaid Cymru went further and called for a ceasefire back then. It's hard to believe that it's almost six months since 8 November, when we then held that historic vote in the Senedd to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. ... there are Welsh citizens who have been directly affected by events in Gaza. Earlier this month, we heard from Gillian and Pete Brisley from Bridgend who lost their daughter and granddaughters in the attack by Hamas on 7 October, and I have attended prayers next to a man in Dar-ul-Isra mosque who has lost over 20 members of his immediate family in Israel's war on Gaza.

**564** While I'm proud that we played our part in condemning what was already a dire situation for the people of Gaza in early November, the bombing, the starvation and the killing has continued relentlessly. According to Al Jazeera, the death toll stands at 1,139 people in Israel and 34,979 Palestinians killed since 7 October. In reality, the death toll is likely to be much higher, as more and more bodies are pulled out of the rubble and the grim discovery of mass graves at two different burial sites outside Nasser and Al-Shifa hospitals, where 390 bodies were recovered. This is devastation and sorrow on an unimaginable scale. ...

**565** In Wales, the response from a large number of people to these horrors has been clear: 'Not in my name'. People have attended rallies and vigils, people have marched, people have fundraised for relief efforts, and people have boycotted firms with connections to the Israeli military. Just like the Senedd ceasefire motion, they send a clear message from the people of Wales that we do not support Israel's continuing military offensive against the civilians in Gaza. To stand by, watch, and do nothing is not an option when the consequences of Israel's incursion into Gaza are so grave. ... Has that passion and determination been matched by our Government? Sadly, it has not. I was surprised last week when the First Minister said to me that—and I quote—

**566** 'It's been the position of the Welsh Government for some time that there should be an immediate ceasefire.'

**567** That was news to me. ... it was news to the anti-war campaigners I'm in touch with, because when the Plaid Cymru ceasefire motion was brought to the Senedd, all Government Ministers abstained. I'm still waiting for clarification from the First Minister on when that position changed, and how it was communicated. ...

**569** When looking at a uniquely Welsh response to the situation in Gaza, I was drawn to the Interfaith Council for Wales website. On the website, since March this year, the Muslim Council of Wales issued, with the South Wales Jewish Representative Council, under the



auspices of the Interfaith Council for Wales, a commitment to dialogue and a call for peace in the middle east. ...

570 After more than six months since the launch of the Israeli offensive, sanctions are long overdue. Stopping armed shipments is long overdue. Divestment of firms and pension schemes fuelling or sustaining this conflict is long overdue. The whole region is on the brink of a war that is much bigger than what we are currently seeing. That has to be stopped before it goes any further. It is incumbent on the international community to reflect the views of the people they serve and say that enough is enough.

571 Wales can play its part in that effort. I'm calling on this Labour Government to be clear and determined in its opposition to the ongoing aggression in Gaza. That begins with a clear call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which will allow the enormous humanitarian operation to take place. This needs to happen for the sake of the people of Gaza, this needs to happen for the sake of the hostages that are still being held, and it needs to happen for the sake of peace and humanity. ...

573 **Rhun ap Iorwerth (Plaid Cymru):** ... We cannot allow the world to forget the horrors of this war. We can't forget those killed and taken hostage on 7 October, and we demand their release. And we must never forget the tens of thousands killed and still being killed in Gaza, the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians facing absolute destitution, malnutrition and homelessness. We must re-emphasise our condemnation of those responsible, demand an end to the atrocities, a ceasefire, sanctions, a massive increase in humanitarian aid. ...

574 **John Griffiths (Labour):** ... Humanity must prevail in Palestine and Israel. ... António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations has spoken very powerfully ... He has said, 'These are moments in history—do not be a bystander.' I'm very proud that people in Wales have marched, have gone to rallies, have protested—and I've been very privileged to be part of that—to make their voices heard for humanity and peace. ...

575 **Sioned Williams (Plaid Cymru):** ... More than 34,000 people have been killed in Gaza and, according to the UN, 72 per cent are thought to be women and children. As a woman, parliamentarian and as a representative of Welsh women in this place, I have a moral duty to use my voice to condemn the deaths and suffering of those innocent women and children. The Welsh Government can't talk about the importance of maternal health, period dignity, children's well-being and the right and importance of education without taking a stand and using every platform and every ounce of influence to call out the appalling, unjust and illegal treatment of children and women in Gaza.

576 Although we don't have powers over international affairs, we can and should as a nation, as a national Parliament and Government make a powerful statement for peace. ... the Senedd and Government of Wales cannot be silent, especially now when we see Israel determined to enact even more death and destruction in Rafah. We need them to speak up and speak out, and the words we must hear are 'Ceasefire now'.

577 **Jenny Rathbone (Labour):** ... we must not turn away. Jana Ayad is a child, roughly the same age as my second granddaughter. She's all skin and bones, starving to death because of a deliberate policy not to allow enough food into Gaza to feed all these people displaced by the bombing. With the right nutrition, Jana could be saved, if the blockade of Gaza was lifted.

578 On Monday night a journalist, Salem Abu Toyor, and his son, were killed when an Israeli bomb struck their house. Israel has killed more journalists in Gaza than all journalists killed in the second world war, in just 200 days. Whether Israeli military are deliberately killing journalists—or does it just have laissez-faire attitude towards killing civilians living in Gaza, and journalists, like health workers and aid workers, get in the way of their campaign?

579 We're told that the latest ceasefire package is a generous offer, says Antony Blinken. One month without bombing and starvation, followed by a massacre in Rafah, or an

immediate assault on Rafah doesn't feel like either generous, attractive or in line with the rules around the conduct of war. This occupying army has a duty to care for civilians in the area, not met in either Gaza or the West Bank. The US Government must insist on an immediate and endurable ceasefire, or withhold all military aid to Israel, and we must continue to shout for an immediate ceasefire and an endurable, sustainable solution.

**580 Mabon ap Gwynfor (Plaid Cymru):** ... Those who defend the actions of the state of Israel say that that state is protecting itself, but killing 35,000 people is not an act of defence. It's not an act of defence to kill a third of them being children. It's not an act of defence to bomb patients in hospital, and it's certainly not an act of defence to prevent humanitarian aid from reaching a population that is about to starve to death. Indeed, according to the International Court of Justice definition, these acts could be described as genocide.

**581** Now, the news that we received some weeks ago on the bombing of the World Central Kitchen vehicles was devastatingly sad, and we heard that three people from the UK were killed. All of a sudden, the UK Government took an interest. What we saw in reality was that the life of one white person from Britain was equivalent to the lives of 11,000 innocent Palestinians.

**582** Now, those bombings have been allowed because Israel is able to buy weapons without any restrictions from the nations providing them. So, I'd be interested to hear in the Minister's response what steps the Welsh Government is taking in order to ensure that no arms from Wales or components from Wales are sold to the Israeli Government. ...

**584 Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice (Lesley Griffiths):** ... All of us around this Chamber have been horrified by the onset of and continuing violence in Israel, Palestine and the wider region. The Welsh Government is conscious that whilst foreign policy issues are not devolved, there are very real and lasting consequences in our Welsh communities. ...

**585** Today's debate also builds upon the ceasefire motion ... which was debated in this Chamber on 8 November last year. In keeping with convention—and I just want to clarify this—Welsh Ministers abstained from the vote on that motion as matters of foreign policy are not devolved to Senedd Cymru. However, in the debate itself my predecessor, the Minister for Social Justice, was clear the Welsh Government wanted to see a full ceasefire as soon as possible. This position has been repeated in Plenary by both the First Minister and the former First Minister ...

**586** There must be a renewed sense of urgency amongst the international community to deliver a full and permanent ceasefire, ending the suffering on all sides as quickly as possible. ... We sincerely hope all relevant partners ensure a significant and immediate increase in aid entering Gaza, agree to release all of the hostages, end the violence, and meaningfully engage in the development of a lasting two-state solution.

**587** A cessation of violence must be the essential platform for a longer term and determined political process towards the establishment of a two-state solution based on a sovereign Palestinian state and a secure Israel. There can be no security for anyone in Israel and Palestine without a long-term peace that is fair to both. ...

**589 Sioned Williams:** You'll remember that, in the Scottish Parliament, there was a debate held calling for an immediate ceasefire. During that debate the former First Minister Humza Yousaf said that he had sent a letter from the Scottish Government to both Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer asking them to call for an immediate ceasefire. Has the Welsh Government done the same?

**590 Lesley Griffiths:** 'I don't know' is the honest answer.

**591 Sioned Williams:** That speaks volumes, really.

**593 Lesley Griffiths:** ... We have been monitoring any community tensions relating to this conflict via our community cohesion programme, and monitoring any spikes in hate incidents via our Wales hate support centre. Although there have been some hateful

incidents, thankfully these have been isolated, and we have not seen the spikes we feared. Ministers have met with Jewish and Muslim leaders to discuss the impacts of the conflict in Israel and Gaza on our communities here in Wales. We've encouraged inter-cultural solidarity and dialogue in partnership with our faith communities forum. To address any issues in schools, we were able to co-author a letter for schools, colleges and universities in Wales with the Muslim Council of Wales and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. We will continue to work in partnership with all faiths, as we have done so well since the forum was established after 9/11, to promote recognition of our common humanity.

594 Prejudice and hate have no place in Wales. We expect allegations and incidents of racism and racial harassment to be fully investigated, with appropriate action taken to address the matter and prevent further incidents from happening.

595 The Welsh Government has made donations to a number of Disasters Emergency Committee appeals in recent years—

597 We have not been able to do this to alleviate some of the suffering in Gaza, because DEC has been unable to launch a campaign. At this time, DEC believes only a lasting ceasefire will enable its agencies the opportunity to effectively provide much-needed aid in Gaza. ...

598 **Delyth Jewell (Plaid Cymru):** ... Do you share my grave concern about aid workers, who are in not just Gaza but in the West Bank at the moment? Some of my former colleagues in ActionAid Palestine were trapped in Gaza for a long time at the beginning of this conflict, and are now in the West Bank in terrible conditions. ...

599 **Lesley Griffiths:** Yes, absolutely. ...

600 The Welsh Government is keeping in regular contact with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to understand UK efforts in relation to the conflict, and to understand any perceived impacts for Wales. Members will know that, last week, the Brisley family situation was raised in First Minister's question, and the FCDO has confirmed to us that support is being provided to the family in these horrific circumstances. The First Minister committed to working with Members who may have constituents with family members who were victims on 7 October, or who are being held as hostages, to understand if further support is needed. Each and every day hostages remain in captivity prolongs the agony of the atrocities, and we want to ensure appropriate support is available.

601 Since 7 October, Welsh Ministers have asked UK Government Ministers about opportunities for resettlement from Gaza for those most in need. It appears to us there continues to be no current prospect of a Gaza resettlement scheme for the UK. ...

602 We've been following the campaign for a Gaza family reunion scheme with keen interest. The Welsh Government already funds the British Red Cross to support family reunion, helping those with refugee status to bring their family members to Wales via a safe and legal route established by the UK Government. However, referrals to the project from Gaza are complicated by the barriers to exit Gaza. The painful history of the region affects the willingness of Palestinians to leave, and the willingness of neighbouring countries to permit entry. There is a clear concern that Palestinians may never be able to return if they leave now. ...

604 Reassurances about the right to return for anyone leaving Gaza are clearly beyond our control. ...

606 Family reunion is vital for any sanctuary seeker living in Wales, regardless of where in the world their separated family member is living. Our approach is to advocate for a family scheme that could support Palestinians or any other person who has found sanctuary here in Wales. And we will continue to call for this.

607 In conclusion, Welsh Government will play a constructive role to support affected communities and families in Wales, and seek to play any part we can in supporting international efforts. We call again for a ceasefire, for an increase in aid, and for the hostages to be released. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13906#A87843>

*The November 2023 debate and vote in the Senedd, referred to above, can be read at <https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13557#A83152>*

*The exchanges at First Minister's Questions referred to above can be read at <https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13874#C582922>*

*The Scottish Parliament debate referred to above can be read at <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-21-11-2023?meeting=15559&iob=132762>*

*The Scottish First Minister's letter to Rishi Sunak, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/gaza-israel-first-minister-letter-uk-government/>*

*The Scottish First Minister's letter to Keir Starmer, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/gaza-israel-first-minister-letter-leader-opposition-uk-parliament/>*

## United Nations

### **Meeting Two Weeks after United States Vetoes Security Council Resolution Recommending Full UN Membership for Palestine, General Assembly Debates Ramifications**

... The Security Council has once again failed to act in the face of the crisis that has escalated for six months in Gaza, imperiling peace and security and causing unchecked suffering and devastation, speakers told the General Assembly ... in a meeting sparked by a veto cast by the United States, blocking a draft resolution on 18 April that would have granted the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations (see [SC/15670](https://www.un.org/press/docs/2023/23-04-18-sc15670.html) for details). ...

**The representative of the United States**, stressing that the present meeting was inconsistent with the initiative and an improper use of the Assembly's time and resources, recalled President Joseph R. Biden's position that, since 7 October, sustainable peace in the region could only be achieved through a two-State solution, with Israel's security guaranteed. "There is no other path that guarantees Israel's security and future as a democratic Jewish State." In that context, he stressed that "premature actions in New York will not achieve Statehood for the Palestinian people". ...

For his part, **the observer for the State of Palestine** said that Israel's occupation is descending "to deeper levels of depravity" as it tries to push Palestinians "out of geography and out of history". It has forcibly displaced two thirds of Palestinians in Gaza all the way to Rafah at the Palestine-Egypt border and now threatens to invade that city at any moment. This "gruesome scenario" must be prevented at all costs and indiscriminate killing, wounding, siege, starvation and collective punishment must be brought to an immediate end. This methodological devastation and dismantling of the requirements for life in Gaza "is an integral part of attempts to erase a nation by destruction, displacement and death", he said, emphasizing that there are only two paths ahead — "one that leads to shared life, and one that leads to common death".

"The admission of the State of Palestine to the UN is an unequivocal signal that Palestinian self-determination and Statehood are not subject to the whims and will of the extremists in Israel," he went on. Further, he questioned how those who supported Israel's admission — while it was violating the UN Charter and fundamental UN resolutions in isolation from a just solution — can explain that Palestine's admission, 75 years later, should be conditioned on the achievement of such a solution. "The world's double standards are not enough to describe how absurd this logic is," he underscored, adding: "We will take our rightful place among the community of nations, sooner or later." ...

In a blistering response, **Israel's delegate** asserted that, once again, the United Nations is seeking to reward the perpetrators of the 7 October horrors, stating: "To hell with our safety, our future and our hostages." Nothing exemplifies the UN's rotten values more than the advancement of Palestinian Statehood, he said, adding that by advancing a Palestinian State, "you are telling the child-murdering Hamas rapists that terror pays off". The UN has done nothing for the victims but has mobilized for the murderers. He went on to state that the Palestinian Authority — which has not condemned Hamas — does not meet the criteria for Statehood; it is paying salaries to the very terrorists who invaded Israel.

The UN is "the primary obstacle to resolving the conflict" in Gaza and "the main impediment to peace," he stressed, adding: "You are a dream come true for every Palestinian terrorist." ...

During the day-long discussion, speakers were near-unanimous in underscoring the urgent need for a durable ceasefire, and for stepped up humanitarian aid. Many delegates pointed out that the Council's lack of action to address the ongoing violence ran contrary to the will of the Organization's membership at large, the most emphatic of which were those whose countries that supported legal action to halt Israel's unrelenting military campaign. ...

Echoing such sentiments, **South Africa's delegate** recalled that the Council is accountable to the UN's Member States, adding that such debates have laid bare the imperative for Council reform. The Council's inability to agree on the Palestinian question has resulted in the repeated cycle of violence, he said, reiterating Israel's obligations to comply with the International Court of Justice's ruling determining that its actions in the Gaza Strip are plausible genocide. Assembly resolution 181, adopted in 1947, was "a promissory note to the people of Israel and Palestine, guaranteeing the creation of two States", he said, underscoring the need for a just political settlement. ...

**Iran's delegate** said that the United States' "shameful veto" demonstrates once again that the country remains "the sole impediment hindering the realization of the noble aspiration of the Palestinian people for full membership". ...

**The United Arab Emirates, speaking for the Arab Group**, was among many delegates urging the Council to ensure an immediate and permanent ceasefire. Commending Qatar's and Egypt's efforts to reach a humanitarian truce, release prisoners and detainees from both sides and allow the entry of a larger number of humanitarian convoys and relief aid, he also emphasized the indispensable role played by UNRWA. **Qatar's delegate** deplored the Israeli threat to invade the city of Rafah, stressing that her country continues its mediation efforts — in partnership with Egypt and the United States — to ensure an immediate and permanent humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and lay the foundation for a serious political process. Meanwhile, **Ireland's representative**, voicing concern over intensified Israeli airstrikes on Rafah, concurred that the ongoing discussions in Cairo desperately need to bring a halt to the violence.

**Jordan's representative**, stating that Israel continues to kill any chance for just and comprehensive peace, drew attention to the urgent need for sustainable humanitarian aid delivery to Gaza, pointing out that two aid convoys carrying basic humanitarian supplies to the Strip were attacked by Israeli settlers today.

Among the five permanent Security Council members, the **Russian Federation** stressed that the United States' actions do not reflect the principled position adopted by other Council members over the last six months ... Stating that Palestine's full UN membership would mean that both parties start negotiations on an equal basis, he expressed hope that Washington, D.C., will finally decide not to oppose the international community on this issue. ...

**The United Kingdom's delegate**, noting his country's abstention during the Council vote, voiced support for a deal that would secure a pause in the fighting, then making progress towards a sustainable ceasefire. Gaza is occupied Palestinian territory and must be part

of a future Palestinian State; however, Hamas is still in control of Gaza, and Israeli hostages remain in captivity. Therefore, he underscored the need to ensure Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza and remove its capacity to launch attacks against Israel. [[click here to read this speech in full](#)] Meanwhile, **France's representative** said that his country is "favourable to heightening the status of Palestine". ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12595.doc.htm>

*General Assembly Resolution 181, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ARES181II.pdf>

## United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

### OCHA oPt Flash Update

The risk of exposure to unexploded ordnance is at its "most dangerous stage," warns UNMAS [United Nations Mine Action Service]; a child sustains limb amputations following the reported detonation of a booby-trapped can of food in Khan Younis. ...

On 29 April, the Government Media Office (GMO) reported that a 14-year-old boy was seriously injured, and sustained limb amputations, after opening a booby-trapped can of food found while looking for his belongings in his house that had been shelled by Israeli forces in Khan Younis. The GMO indicated that many people have been recently injured due to the explosion of booby-trapped canned goods, urging the population to exercise maximum care. Based on UN estimates of unexploded munitions, the GMO assessed that around 7,500 tons of unexploded ordnance (UXO) might be scattered throughout Gaza, appealing for assistance by the international community to remove explosive remnants of war (ERW) and mitigate the risk for civilians. ...

**To read the full Update see**

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-160>

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## Other Relevant Information

### Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics

#### **On the Occasion of Holocaust Day, 2024**

... At the end of 2023, the world Jewish population was 15.7 million, of them 7.1 million live in Israel (45% of the world Jewish population) and 6.3 (40% of the world Jewish population) live in the United States.

In 1939, on the eve of World War II, the world Jewish population was 16.6 million, of whom 449,000 (3%) lived in Israel. ...

Of the world Jewish population of 15.7 million:

- 7.1 million Jews live in Israel (45%)
- 6.3 million Jews live in the United States (40%)
- 440,000 live in France (3%)
- 398,000 live in Canada (2.5%)
- 312,000 live in the United Kingdom (2%)
- 171,000 live in Argentina (2%)
- 132,000 live in Russia (1.1%)
- 125,000 live in Germany (0.8%)
- 117,000 live in Australia (0.7%) ...

## 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>

Amendment Paper

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/55298/documents/4775>

#### **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

### **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/>

### **Faith school designation reforms** (closing date 20 June 2024)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/faith-schools-policy-team/faith-school-designation-reforms/>

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