



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

Michael Ellis (Conservative): Can we have a debate on antisemitism at UK universities? There are reports in today's press that some groups wish to replicate American-style protests, during which there has been rioting and criminal damage. At Columbia, students have chanted terrorist slogans. At Stanford, they have worn Hamas headbands. At Princeton, they have flown the Hezbollah flag. At Harvard, they have torn down the stars and stripes and raised a foreign one, and at George Washington, they called for the "final solution", and posted signs saying that they would not disperse until Jews go back to their "real homes". We do not want this type of terrorist-supporting delinquency at UK universities. Does the Leader of the House agree that the Government and Opposition parties must combine to do everything they can to stop such things happening here?

Penny Mordaunt: My right hon. and learned Friend is right to draw attention to the disgusting scenes that we have seen in some universities in the United States. Those activities are being met with the appropriate action, and some universities have taken a very strict stance on them. I think and hope that all UK universities will be in no doubt about their responsibilities to all who attend their campuses and facilities, but particularly those in communities who feel under attack. That is what we expect of them; we hope and expect that they will meet the notion of similar protests with an extremely strict response.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-02/debates/315A321A-097F-4B07-98C4-53E53B9A679F/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-996A157D-6E94-426B-84E4-78735937CDAA>

Business of the House

Pauline Latham (Conservative): ... I have spoken before about my Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022. It came into force in February last year, and makes it a criminal offence to exploit vulnerable children by arranging for them to be married. I have spoken to teachers and lecturers who know nothing about the Act. We must ensure that teachers, lecturers, faith leaders and the police know how to spot the signs of potential forced or arranged marriages. Will the Leader of the House speak to her colleagues across Government to ensure that we get these messages across much more effectively to communities throughout the country?

Penny Mordaunt: I thank my hon. Friend for all the work she has done on this subject. She has campaigned diligently on it, and made a huge difference to the lives of many people. The forced marriage unit, which is run jointly by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Home Office, is leading the Government's work in this area. It is running outreach and undertaking casework, and operates both inside and outside the UK. I will ensure the relevant Minister and officials have heard her suggestions on how its work can be enhanced.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-02/debates/315A321A-097F-4B07-98C4-53E53B9A679F/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-A443B2E5-ABDF-4DFE-BEA9-99C3BC84C5C2>

The Coronation Roll

The Coronation Roll

The Coronation Roll is the true state record of the Coronation proceedings from the record of the proclamations on Accession, to listing the Coronation Claims process and followed by a complete record of the Coronation service as it occurred at Westminster Abbey on 6th May 2023.

<https://www.coronationroll.gov.uk/roll/>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... I walked here today through Victoria Tower Gardens, where it is still impossible to walk along the river because of the barricades around the Buxton memorial fountain, which are far too extensive. If people care about memorials in Victoria Tower Gardens, they ought to make sure that the gardens are properly accessible whenever that is possible.

The Select Committee on the Holocaust Memorial Bill reported recently in document HC121, and I have tabled early-day motion 711 ...

As the Committee has clearly indicated, before the Government think of bringing the Bill back to the Chamber of the House of Commons they need to do a number of things. First, they must review security. We have seen the Holocaust memorial in Hyde Park covered up because of marches going on around London, and everyone knows that a memorial in

Victoria Tower Gardens of the kind that is proposed would be a major target. The only way of providing security is to exclude the public from this park, which is the only park for local residents.

Secondly, the National Infrastructure Commission has said that this project is undeliverable. Will the Government please ask the members of the commission whether they have changed their minds? Last year the National Audit Office reported that the costs had risen in one year from £102 million to £137 million. Will the Government please ask its members whether that can be reviewed? How will the Chancellor agree to pay running costs of between £5 million and £10 million?

I think that the Government ought to delay, do what is suggested in my early-day motion, and then report back to the House.

Mr Speaker: It might be more helpful if the Father of the House applies for an Adjournment debate.

Penny Mordaunt: I am sure that my hon. Friend knows how to apply for a debate and will listen to your encouragement, Mr Speaker. I will certainly ensure, as I do every week, that the Secretary of State has heard the issues that my hon. Friend raises—I will feed them in. On the matter of security, he will know that there is a working group, led by the Houses of Parliament and those in Government, to make sure that all these very important issues are looked at.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-02/debates/315A321A-097F-4B07-98C4-53E53B9A679F/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-D210B490-0623-4026-B279-72E5B6231B63>

The report referred to above can be read at

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

The Early Day Motion referred to above can be read at

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

A Ministerial Statement detailing the revised costs referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2023-06-28/hcws891>

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Israel

See also the Commons oral question from Michael Ellis “Business of the House” that is included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Topical Questions: Business and Trade

Michael Ellis (Conservative): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be odd and inappropriate for the United Kingdom to impose any form of arms embargo against Israel when His Majesty’s armed forces are in the region and working with Israel to provide humanitarian support, and the UK would expect Israel to help in the protection of His Majesty’s forces?

Kemi Badenoch: My right hon. and learned Friend makes a good point. The Prime Minister addressed this issue yesterday. I know that there is a lot of interest in arms exports to Israel, and yesterday my entire Department was blockaded by protesters, meaning that civil servants who needed to get to work could not do so. The Government continue to monitor closely the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. All export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-

case basis against the strategic export licensing criteria. The Government take their defence export responsibilities extremely seriously and operate some of the most robust export controls in the world.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-02/debates/71E8A819-CBD7-4810-B43D-EB1D01CFDFDF/TopicalQuestions#contribution-A87876FC-5E58-44A4-950E-18103BEA8FCC>

The Prime Minister's comments, referred to above, can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-01/debates/fe86b9d0-95de-472b-b888-1d8f266a8c41/CommonsChamber#contribution-0B9580D7-DB05-4F3A-B245-F5DDD4FAB539>

Business of the House

Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat): ... We Liberal Democrats have for many years called for tougher controls on UK exports of arms to ensure they are not used in human rights abuses. We have called for a presumption of denial to apply to countries whose Governments are listed in the Foreign Office's annual "Human Rights and Democracy" report. A presumption of denial would mean that the default position of the UK Government is not to permit arms exports. For many years, the Foreign Office has listed human rights issues arising from action that the Israeli Government have carried out in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In the light of a possibly imminent humanitarian catastrophe in Rafah, if the Israeli Government are carrying out their threat to attack, may we have an urgent debate in Government time about UK arms exports to the middle east?

Penny Mordaunt: ... On UK arms export control, the hon. Lady will know that we have stringent policies in this country and that the actions that are taken stemming from those policies are scrutinised by this House. We take this incredibly seriously. As for the specifics, I also point her to the fact that we have seen Israel have to defend itself against the most unwarranted and reckless attack from Iran. It is very important not only that we say that Israel has a right to defend itself, but, because it is one of our allies and partners, that we understand our obligations to enable it to do so. These are difficult matters and she will know that both the Government's policy and the procedures in this House to scrutinise the actions that come from this policy are stringent indeed.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-02/debates/315A321A-097F-4B07-98C4-53E53B9A679F/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-27742133-1744-44DB-BEF2-311A226FD51A>

Business of the House

Gareth Thomas (Labour Co-op): The situation in Gaza continues to be profoundly disturbing. We need a humanitarian ceasefire, all the hostages brought home, and no incursion by the Israel Defence Forces into Rafah; that would be catastrophic. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency is pivotal to avoiding famine in Gaza and for the future of Palestinians more generally. Could we have a debate in Government time on why Ministers will not yet restart funding to UNRWA, given the call by no less than the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, for donors to restart that funding?

Penny Mordaunt: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising those concerning matters. I will certainly make sure that the Foreign Secretary has heard the concerns he has raised. Aside from the immediate issues on which the hon. Gentleman is primarily focused, UNRWA has been financially fragile for a long time, with little long-term financial planning and security. There are many issues that the Foreign Secretary and his team will want to consider before taking a decision on whether to restart funding.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-02/debates/315A321A-097F-4B07-98C4-53E53B9A679F/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-42DA2A6D-7241-4F0F-BC17-8A661602A4AC>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Palestinians

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [24101] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the US's sanctions on (a) Mount Hebron Fund, Shlom Asiraich and (b) the leader of Lehava, Ben Zion Gopstein; and whether he has plans to implement sanctions on those actors.

Andrew Mitchell: We do not speculate on future designations.

The UK continues to take a strong stance against settler violence. Extremist settlers, by targeting and attacking Palestinian civilians, are undermining security and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians.

On 12 February, the Foreign Secretary announced sanctions on four extremist Israeli settlers who have committed human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. Those now subject to a UK asset freeze, travel and visa ban include Moshe Sharvit, Yinon Levy, Zvi Bar Yosef and Ely Federman. These measures are part of wider UK efforts to support a more stable West Bank, which is vital for the peace and security of both Palestinians and Israelis.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24101>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-extremist-settlers-in-the-west-bank>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Trade Agreements: Israel

Owen Thompson (SNP) [22342] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she is taking steps in the negotiations on the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement to ensure that any such agreement includes a clear definition of the territory to which it applies.

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [22641] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had discussions with her Israeli counterpart on the application of the UK-Israel Free Trade Agreement to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Imports: Israeli Settlements

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [22640] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has (a) requested and (b) received legal advice on allowing imports from illegal Israeli settlements.

Greg Hands: The UK's position on settlements within the Occupied Palestinian Territories is clear: they are illegal under international law and undermine the prospect of a two-state solution.

Under the existing UK-Israel trade agreement, goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements are not entitled to tariff and trade preferences under either the agreement between the UK and Israel, or the agreement between the UK and the Palestinian Authority.

This will not change in the Israel FTA. The UK will maintain its long-standing foreign policy positions throughout this negotiation, including with respect to settlements.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-17/22342>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-18/22641>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-18/22640>

Export Controls: Israel

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [23632] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether end-use restrictions apply to controlled goods exported to Israel.

Alan Mak: Our export licensing system is based on a rigorous assessment of every

licence application on a case-by-case basis against strict assessment criteria, the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (the SELC), prior to the export taking place. The SELC provide a thorough risk assessment framework for export licence applications and require us to think hard about the impact of providing equipment and its capabilities. We will not license the export of equipment where to do so would be inconsistent with the SELC, including where there is an unacceptable risk of the equipment being diverted to an undesirable end-use or end-user. These are not decisions we take lightly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23632>

The Criteria referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

Israel: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [23631] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what military aid the UK has provided to Israel since 7 October 2023.

Leo Docherty: Since 7 October 2023 the UK Government has provided non-lethal aid including medical aid.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23631>

Gaza: White Phosphorus

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [23965] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies on reports of the alleged use of using phosphorous munitions in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We continue to call on all parties to ensure the protection of civilians.

The situation in Gaza is desperate and we are continuing to support a deal which would secure a pause in the fighting.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-26/23965>

Israel: Gaza

Patrick Grady (SNP) [22747] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether arms exported from the United Kingdom were used in the attack by Israeli Defence Forces on the Maghazi refugee camp in Gaza on 16 April 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: The British Government has underlined the need for Israel to ensure effective deconfliction in Gaza and ensure effective systems to guarantee the safety of humanitarian operations. We continue to raise this with Israel at the highest levels.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-19/22747>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Israel

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24147] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether he has shared information gathered by RAF Shadow R1 flights over Gaza with the International Criminal Court.

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24148] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether RAF Shadow R1 flights over Gaza have recorded evidence of mass graves at (a) Nasser and (b) Al-Shifa Hospital.

Leo Docherty: The unarmed UK reconnaissance aircraft are employed solely for the purpose of locating the remaining hostages.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24147>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24148>

Israel: International Law

Emma Hardy (Labour) [23789] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the importance of upholding international law.

Andrew Mitchell: We have consistently called on all parties to the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law and ensure the protection of civilians. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this during his visit to Israel on 17 April.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-25/23789>

Israel: Palestinians

Jane Hunt (Conservative) [23604] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps he is taking with his international counterparts to help secure peace between Israel and Palestine in the Holy Land.

Andrew Mitchell: The fastest way to end the conflict is to secure a deal which gets the hostages out and allows for a pause in the fighting in Gaza. We must then work with our international partners to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire.

The UK is doing all it can to reach a long-term solution to this crisis by: calling for the immediate release of all hostages; continuing to support a deal which would secure a pause in the fighting; pushing as hard as we can to get aid to Palestinian civilians; working with partners to deescalate the situation in the region; and building momentum towards a lasting peace.

Building momentum towards a lasting peace will require the release of all hostages; removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; and a political horizon for the Palestinians, providing a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

We have played an active role in discussions at the UN. The passing of UN Security Council Resolution 2728 on 25 March reflected international consensus behind the UK's position. We continue to use public and private diplomatic channels as well as multilateral fora.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23604>

UNSCR 2728, referred to above, can be read at

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728\(2024\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2728(2024))

Gaza: Israel

Martyn Day (SNP) [23772] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will have discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the (a) effectiveness of command and control within the Israeli Defence Forces and (b) reports that a senior commander who was dismissed in connection with the strike that killed international aid workers in Gaza had expressed personal views on aid to Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary visited Israel on 17 April and held high-level talks with Prime Minister Netanyahu, President Herzog and Foreign Minister Katz. He reiterated the need for an immediate pause in the fighting in Gaza to get aid in and hostages out.

The UK is pushing as hard as we can to get aid to Palestinian civilians. Israel must fulfil its commitments to enable a flood of aid, including by guaranteeing deconfliction for aid workers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-25/23772>

United Nations

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [23508] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what assessment

he has made of the potential implications for his policies of The Technical Report for the United Nations Secretary-General, published on 22 April 2024.

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.

We will set out our position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of the final report of the Independent Review Group led by Catherine Colonna, 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, including through other UN agencies and British charities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23508>

The Technical Report, referred to above, can be read at

https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf

UNRWA's response referred to above can be read at

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/independent-review-unrwa-adherence-humanitarian-principle-neutrality>

UNRWA: Finance

Caroline Lucas (Green) [23720] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, with reference to the Final Report for the United Nations Secretary-General: Independent Review of Mechanisms and Procedures to Ensure Adherence by UNRWA to the Humanitarian Principle of Neutrality, published on 20 April 2024, if he will make it his policy to resume funding of UNRWA operations in Gaza; and whether he has had discussions with his German counterpart on their decision to resume funding for UNRWA following publication of that report.

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.

We will set out our 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, including through other UN agencies and British charities.

We have regular discussions with international counterparts, including Germany, on all aspects of the conflict.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-25/23720>

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

https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf

UNRWA's response referred to above can be read at

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/independent-review-unrwa-adherence-humanitarian-principle-neutrality>

Gaza: Israel

Stephen Farry (Alliance) [7644] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2024 to Question UIN 7644 on Gaza: Israel, what recent assessment he made of the implications for his policies of allegations that Israel has used starvation as a weapon of war.

Andrew Mitchell: We are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as

possible by land, sea and air.

On 20 March, the Foreign Secretary announced the UK has funded WFP to provide 2000 tons of food aid, enough to feed 275,000 people in Gaza.

Israel has now committed to significant steps to increase the amount of aid getting to Gaza. We have seen an encouraging increase in the number of aid trucks getting into Gaza, but we must see further action to ensure more aid actually gets over the border.

Israel must fulfil its commitments to enable a flood of aid, including by guaranteeing deconfliction for aid workers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23610>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-19/7644>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/largest-uk-aid-delivery-enters-gaza-to-feed-275000-people>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [23510] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what diplomatic steps his Department is taking to help increase access to medical care for children in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We are doing all we can to get more aid into Gaza by land, air and sea. A UK Med field hospital, funded by the UK, is up and running in Gaza. This facility is staffed by UK and local medics and has already treated thousands of patients.

We have provided targeted support for children through a £5.75 million contribution. This is supporting work to assist over 5,800 children with severe malnourishment and 853,000 children, adolescents and caregivers affected by the conflict to receive emergency and child protection services, including mental health and psychosocial support.

The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister have also underlined the need for Israel to ensure effective deconfliction in Gaza, and to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of medical personnel and facilities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23510>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [24080] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his international counterparts on the UN Security Forces taking over the border checks for aid at the Gaza border.

Andrew Mitchell: The deployment of UN peacekeepers would require a UN Security Council Resolution and the consent of all parties to the conflict. We judge neither of these requirements to be obtainable at this time.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24080>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [24081] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps his Department is taking to deliver aid into the north of Gaza in the context of the infrastructure challenges by land.

Andrew Mitchell: We have been doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air, including conducting airdrops and supporting the establishment of a new maritime corridor.

However land routes remain the best way to get aid into Gaza at the scale needed. We have welcomed recent commitments from Israel to increase aid flows, including allowing the delivery of humanitarian aid through the Port of Ashdod and the Erez crossing. The UK has long urged Israel to take these steps but we must see further

action to ensure more aid actually gets over the border. The Foreign Secretary discussed this with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on 17 April.

We recently announced £3 million of additional funding for equipment to support UN and aid agencies at new and existing land crossings to get more aid into Gaza. The UK's contribution will include trucks, forklifts, generators, fuel stores and lighting towers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24081>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-in-israel-to-press-for-de-escalation-of-middle-east-tensions>

Gaza: Maternity Services

Emma Hardy (Labour) [23788] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made an assessment of the impact of the humanitarian situation in Gaza on the delivery of maternity care.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK Government is closely monitoring the situation in Gaza and collects information from multiple sources, including on the status of healthcare provision. We are also in regular contact with humanitarian partners who operate in Gaza.

The UK is doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air. We trebled our aid commitment during the last financial year, including £4.25 million to the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, UNFPA, to provide life-saving support to vulnerable women and girls in Gaza. This support is expected to reach about 111,500 women, around 1 in 5 of the adult women in Gaza. It will support up to 100 community midwives, the distribution of around 20,000 menstrual hygiene management kits and 45,000 clean delivery kits.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-25/23788>

West Bank: Violence

Tommy Sheppard (SNP) [23509] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the level of settler violence in the West Bank.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK continues to take a strong stance against settler violence. Extremist settlers, by targeting and attacking Palestinian civilians, are undermining security and stability for both Israelis and Palestinians.

We have already moved to ban those responsible for violence in the West Bank from the UK and announced new sanctions designations against four extremist Israeli settlers who have violently attacked Palestinians in the West Bank.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23509>

House of Lords Written Answers

Overseas Students: Gaza

Baroness Gohir (Crossbench) [HL4066] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the number of students in the UK who are on a student visa from Gaza and what support is being provided to them.

Baroness Barran: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), now part of JISC, is responsible for collecting and publishing data about UK higher education (HE). The latest statistics refer to the 2021/22 academic year.

Table 28 of HESA's 'Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2021/22' reports the number of non-UK domiciled HE students by country of domicile. This data is accessible at:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-28>

In the 2021/22 academic year, there were 245 student enrolments at UK HE providers who were domiciled in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (formerly the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) prior to their studies. Universities offer a range of dedicated support to their international students before they arrive in the UK, on arrival and during their studies. This includes both pastoral care and financial support. If a student is experiencing difficulties, they should contact the university to discuss their circumstances.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/hl4066>

Iran: Israel

Baroness Goldie (Conservative) [HL3944] To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the total cost to all parties of intercepting Iranian drones launched against Israel on 13 April; and what proportion of that cost was borne by the UK.

The Earl of Minto: The Net Additional Costs of Military Operations will be identified and reported in the Annual Report and Accounts in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-18/hl3944>

Iran: Israel

Baroness Goldie (Conservative) [HL3945] To ask His Majesty's Government whether the recent participation of the RAF in intercepting Iranian drones aimed at Israel required UK military assets to be withdrawn from any other exercise or deployment.

The Earl of Minto: We already have a significant presence in the region, but as a prudent measure a number of aircraft were temporarily moved from our NATO operations in Romania to bolster our existing presence. We coordinated with NATO and our Allies to ensure there was no impact to existing operations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-18/hl3945>

Iran: Israel

Baroness Goldie (Conservative) [HL3946] To ask His Majesty's Government whether the recent interception of Iranian drones by the RAF was part of Operation Shader; if so, whether the remit of Operation Shader has been expanded; and if so, in what way.

The Earl of Minto: The deployment of additional RAF aircraft to the region was authorised to intercept any attacks within range of existing missions. The remit of Op SHADER has not changed, it remains focused solely on countering Daesh.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-18/hl3946>

Jerusalem: Cultural Heritage

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL3963] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the occupation by Israeli settlers of Cows Garden in the Armenian Quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem on 3 April.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We have not held discussions with Israeli counterparts on the situation in the Cow Garden site of the Armenian Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem. The UK is monitoring the situation and is clear on the need to avoid any further rise in tensions. British Consulate General staff in Jerusalem met members of the community on 19 January, discussed the current situation and visited the Cow's Garden site. The UK's position on the status of Jerusalem is clear and long-standing: it should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states. The UK is a strong supporter of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and an advocate for the integrity of culturally important areas to be respected.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UK sanctions extremist groups and individuals for settler violence in the West Bank

... The Foreign Secretary has ... announced further sanctions on extremist Israeli groups and individuals for violence in the West Bank. ...

The measures follow an unprecedented rise in settler violence in the West Bank over the last year, with the [UN recording at least 800 incidents since October](#).

Hilltop Youth, one of the groups sanctioned today, is a hardline nationalist Israeli youth group which establishes illegal settler outposts across the West Bank with the stated mission of expelling all Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. Lehava is also sanctioned today for facilitating, inciting, and promoting violence against Arab and Palestinian communities.

Foreign Secretary Lord Cameron said: Extremist settlers are undermining security and stability and threatening prospects for peace.

This latest package of sanctions targets 2 groups leading these attacks, and 4 individuals who are directly responsible for egregious violence against Palestinian civilians.

The Israeli authorities must clamp down on those responsible. The UK will not hesitate to take further action if needed, including through further sanctions.

The 4 individuals sanctioned today for egregious human rights abuses against Palestinian communities are:

- Noam Federman: a radical settler activist and former leader and spokesperson of the now-defunct Kach party, that espoused overtly racist and violent policies. He has trained settler groups to commit acts of violence against Palestinians and how to avoid repercussions from the Israeli state
- Neria Ben Pazi: is responsible for illegally constructing 3 illegal outposts between 2015 and 2023 and has supported and participated in acts of violence and displacement of Bedouin and Palestinian communities in the West Bank
- Eden Levi: has been documented on multiple occasions as taking part in assaults and intimidation of Palestinians, as part of a wider intimidation campaign aiming to drive their population out of the area. ...
- Elisha Yered: is an unofficial spokesperson for Hilltop Youth. He has a history of making inflammatory statements inciting religious hatred and violence, including justifying the killing of Palestinians on religious grounds, and calling for the takeover of Palestinian land and the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank

Today's measures impose financial restrictions on the entities and individuals, and travel restrictions on the individuals. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-extremist-groups-and-individuals-for-settler-violence-in-the-west-bank>

Department for Business and Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet; Israel

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66322ad52ea7c8bba6ebe128/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-05-03.pdf>

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66321d5fc475cab8c9ebe10c/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-05-03.pdf>

Pillay: Israel is helped by ‘powerful States’ in violation of Palestinians’ rights

When tensions erupted in East Jerusalem in April 2021 at the beginning of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, daily clashes involving Palestinians, Israeli settlers and Israeli forces led to spiraling violence and death. In response, the Human Rights Council set up a top panel of independent rights experts to investigate reports of violations of international law. Today, more than ever amid the ongoing war in Gaza, this [independent commission of inquiry](#) has its work cut out. We took a closer look at its role, speaking to its chair, former UN Human Rights Commissioner and judge Navi Pillay ...

In 2021, the imminent threat of forced eviction of Palestinian families from their homes – initiated by Israeli settler organisations – provoked unrest in and around the Old City of Jerusalem.

This later extended to the wider occupied West Bank, culminating in a “Day of Rage” on 14 May 2021, when Israeli forces killed 10 Palestinians, the highest number recorded at that time by the UN in a single day. ...

Three years on, the [Commission](#)’s mandate has become broader, particularly since Hamas-led terror attacks on southern Israel on 7 October, which killed some 1,200 people and left more than 250 taken hostage prompting the intense bombardment of Gaza by Israeli Defense Forces.

To date, more than 34,500 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and over 77,700 Palestinians injured, according to the enclave’s health authorities, [while deadly clashes have resumed in the occupied West Bank](#).

The Commission’s mandate now includes additional issues, including reporting on States that transfer military and other weapons to Israel, raising questions about potential complicity in violations of international law. ...

Ms. Pillay said a unique aspect of the current situation in the Middle East is that evidence of war crimes is being gathered in real time, meaning that the world is conscious of the events unfolding. ... that’s why it’s so much more shocking,” she insisted. ...

Nobody could have predicted what happened on 7 October and what has followed, the rights expert continued, noting that the Commission was “the first” on 10 October to issue a [statement calling for a cessation of hostilities](#).

This was “long before other organs of the UN spoke up”, she said, “long before the political organs of the UN reacted. Even now, we have the [Security Council](#) resolution, the last one calling for a ceasefire, and yet the United States representative feels that resolution does not have any validity.”

It’s disturbing, she continued, when one country continues to violate international law with the help of powerful States who say they support human rights.

“It’s very disturbing if one country gets away with that.” ...

She said South Africa’s [recent petition to the ICJ](#) alleging that Israel’s actions in Gaza violate the [Genocide Convention](#) signals a significant development in the application of universal jurisdiction. It also marks the first time that a third country has brought an application to the ICJ, she noted.

“How come it’s only now that the occupation itself is being challenged, that the ICJ had not been asked to give legal advice on the lawfulness of the occupation itself and the responsibilities of States towards an unlawful endeavour?” Ms. Pillay asked. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149356>

Targeting Rafah could lead to slaughter, warns UN aid agency

An Israeli military operation in Rafah “could lead to a slaughter” and cripple lifesaving

humanitarian work throughout Gaza, the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said on Friday. “Any ground operation would mean more suffering and death” for the 1.2 million displaced Palestinians sheltering in and around the Strip’s southernmost city, OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke told journalists in Geneva.

Echoing those concerns, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) said that “Band-Aid” contingency plans have been made in case a full-scale military incursion does indeed happen, but they will not be enough to prevent Gaza’s humanitarian catastrophe from getting worse. ...

“This contingency plan is Band-Aids. It will absolutely not prevent the expected substantial additional mortality and morbidity caused by a military operation,” said Dr. Rik Peepkorn, WHO Representative in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

... the WHO medic warned that a military operation would spark a new wave of displacement, more overcrowding, less access to essential food, water and sanitation “and definitely more outbreaks (of disease)”. ...

The worsening security situation could also severely impede the movement of food, water and medical supplies into and across Gaza via the border points, the WHO official noted. ...

Despite “a slight improvement” in the availability and diversity of food in Gaza in recent weeks, Dr. Peepkorn rejected any suggestion that the looming threat of acute malnutrition had receded for the enclave’s most vulnerable.

“We will see the effects for years to come,” the WHO official continued, noting that 30 children have now reportedly died because of illnesses linked to malnutrition.

Deaths linked to the kind of food insecurity that Gazans have endured should have been completely preventable, Dr. Peepkorn said, pointing to the widespread destruction of poultry farming and fishing production along with vegetable and fruit growing, which are “not there anymore.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149306>

10,000 people feared buried under the rubble in Gaza

More than 10,000 people are believed buried under the rubble in Gaza after nearly seven months of devastating conflict, UN humanitarians [said](#) on Thursday, citing the enclave’s health authorities.

“It could take up to three years to retrieve the bodies using the primitive tools they have on hand,” the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said, amid rising temperatures that will accelerate the decomposition of bodies, potentially increasing the threat of disease spreading.

Citing the Palestinian civil defence authority, OCHA said that the recovery of dead bodies from the debris is a huge challenge, owing to a lack of bulldozers, excavators and personnel.

Entire neighbourhoods have been levelled amid intense and ongoing Israeli bombardment “across much of the Gaza Strip” from the air, land and sea, the UN aid office noted. ...

In a call for an end to the hostilities, sparked by Hamas-led terror raids on southern Israel on 7 October that killed some 1,250 people and saw more than 250 taken hostage, top UN humanitarian official Catherine Russell insisted that the “nightmare” must end. ...

“Over 200 days of war have already killed and maimed tens of thousands of children in Gaza,” Ms. Russell added, amid deepening fears of a full-scale Israeli military operation in Rafah. ...

Following the withdrawal of Israeli troops last month from the southern city of Khan Younis, a UN assessment team mission on 10 April reported that streets and public spaces were littered with unexploded weapons. In addition, 1,000-pound bombs were found “lying on

main intersections and inside schools".

UN-led efforts are ongoing to make areas safe for Gazans to return to Khan Younis, including damage assessments at facilities belonging to the UN refugee agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) and mapping high-risk areas containing shrapnel and unexploded ordnance.

Another vital aspect of this work is awareness-raising sessions, which the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) conducts via social media, mobile phone text messages and leaflets to around 1.2 million people in Gaza, as part of aid packages distributed by other humanitarian partners. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149256>

UN Development Programme

Gaza War: Expected Socio-Economic Impacts on the State of Palestine

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-05/2400314e-keymessages-gaza-web.pdf>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

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

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

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

**** Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill**

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

Amendment Paper

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/55382/documents/4806>

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

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

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

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

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

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 10 days**

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