



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

See also the Westminster Hall debate "Countering Iran's Hostile Activities" that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Written Answers

Religious Buildings: Conservation

Lord Redesdale (Liberal Democrat) [HL4041] To ask His Majesty's Government how many places of worship are currently on the Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Of the 4,871 entries on the 2023 Historic England Heritage at Risk Register, 943 are places of worship. Two other entries are also assessed as buildings or structures which affect places of worship.

The Heritage at Risk Register aims to protect and manage the historic environment. Historic England works with owners, 'friends of' groups, developers, and others to find solutions for historic places and sites at risk across England, ensuring their survival for the benefit of present and future generations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-23/hl4041>

Religious Buildings: Conservation

Lord Redesdale (Liberal Democrat) [HL4042] To ask His Majesty's Government how many places of worship have been on the Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register for five years or more.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: There are 644 entries assessed as places of

worship which have been on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register for at least five years. There are also two other entries assessed as buildings or structures which affect places of worship.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-23/hl4042>

Religious Buildings: Conservation

Lord Redesdale (Liberal Democrat) [HL4081] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps Historic England are taking to reduce the number of places of worship on the Heritage at Risk Register.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay: Since 2009 Historic England has provided grants to enable churches and other religious denominations to employ support officers to advise, encourage and help local congregations to maintain and repair their places of worship and remove them from the Heritage at Risk Register. In 2022–23 the nine support officers in post directly supported 234 congregations and ran 22 training events, attended by 355 delegates, in addition to tailored training at individual places of worship.

Historic England architects, surveyors, engineers and technical advisers are also available to provide advice to help congregations address specific structural and repair problems across England. As a statutory consultee in both the national planning and ecclesiastical exemption processes, Historic England also provides formal advice on proposals for works to historic buildings, including informal advice pre-application and statutory responses in both legal frameworks. This expertise and assistance helps to remove places of worship from the Heritage at Risk Register.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/hl4081>

House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee

Assisted Dying/Assisted Suicide: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44641/documents/221960/default/>

Downing Street

Prime Minister to call on university leaders to protect Jewish students

... Vice Chancellors from some of the country's leading universities will join forces with the government today (9 May) to discuss actions to address the rise in antisemitic abuse on campus and disruption to students' learning.

The Prime Minister, Education Secretary, Communities Secretary and Security Minister will call on university leaders to ensure a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitic abuse is adopted on all campuses.

The government has made clear that debate and the open exchange of views in universities is essential, but that this can never tip over into hate speech, harassment or incitement of violence.

The meeting will also help to inform upcoming government guidance on combatting antisemitism on campus. Meanwhile, the Office for Students (OfS) has committed to publishing the response to its consultation on a new condition of registration, which could give OfS the power to impose sanctions where there is clear evidence that universities are failing to take sufficient or appropriate action to tackle harassment, including antisemitic abuse.

In the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced £7 million of extra support to tackle

antisemitic abuse in educational settings. £500,000 of this will be dedicated to supporting the work of the University Jewish Chaplaincy, boosting support for Jewish students on campus.

The University Jewish Chaplaincy helps students deal with incidents of antisemitism and intimidation and currently supports over 8,500 students at over 100 universities in 13 regions.

Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, said: Universities should be places of rigorous debate but also bastions of tolerance and respect for every member of their community.

A vocal minority on our campuses are disrupting the lives and studies of their fellow students and, in some cases, propagating outright harassment and antisemitic abuse. That has to stop.

Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, said: I have made it absolutely clear that universities must crack down on antisemitism and ensure that protests do not unduly disrupt university life. ...

The Union of Jewish Students (UJS) have criticised the “toxic environment” faced by Jewish students across the country. According to the Communities Security Trust, there was an increase of 203% in university-related antisemitic incidents between 2022 and 2023.

Ministers will make clear that universities must take immediate disciplinary action if any student is found to be inciting racial hatred or violence – and contact the police where they believe a criminal act has been committed.

The Education Secretary wrote to Vice Chancellors on Sunday setting out government expectations in respect of the support being provided to Jewish students. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-to-call-on-university-leaders-to-protect-jewish-students>

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autumn-statement-2023/autumn-statement-2023-html>

The letter referred to above is not currently available online.

University Jewish Chaplaincy

Statement on Government funding for Jewish student welfare

Following the Prime Minister’s announcement that University Jewish Chaplaincy will receive a significant funding boost over the next three years, UJC Chairman, Uri Goldberg said the following:

‘Since Hamas’ terrorist attacks on October 7, 2023, Jewish students and Chaplains have endured a relentless barrage of antisemitism on campuses across the country. Throughout this time, our Chaplains have worked tirelessly to provide residential faith-based welfare support to our Jewish students as they continue their courses as best they can in the midst of continuous waves of hatred and disruption.

Whilst there is much more that needs to be done, today’s Government funding is unequivocal recognition of the challenges our students have faced, and we are immensely grateful to the Prime Minister and the Department for Education for their support at this unprecedented time.

We hope that the Government roundtable with Vice Chancellors from some of the UK’s leading universities will result in tangible actions to address the hate-fuelled atmosphere and antisemitic abuse that currently exists on British campuses.’

<https://twitter.com/JewishChaplain/status/1788515130751234294>

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See also the Westminster Hall debate “Countering Iran’s Hostile Activities” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister’s Questions

The Prime Minister: ... Just this morning, we learned that the Labour Mayor in London believes there is an “equivalence” between the brutal terrorist attack of Hamas and Israel defending itself. Let me be crystal clear: there is absolutely no equivalence between a terrorist group and democratic state. Will [Keir Starmer] take this opportunity to demonstrate that the Labour party has changed? Will he condemn those comments from the Labour Mayor?

Keir Starmer: I know that was the last run-out before the general election, but the Prime Minister is getting ahead of himself in asking me questions. ...

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman had the opportunity to condemn the comments of his Mayor—a Mayor who said that there is an “equivalence” between Hamas and Israel—and he did not do that. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-08/debates/C7C51F10-A517-44C6-879C-7A6DD8A6C6B6/Engagements#contribution-D66A8817-6953-48F0-8788-A40C3FC0DF49>

The Mayor of London’s comments referred to above can be read at

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/05/07/sadiq-khan-criticised-for-calling-for-equivalence-in-israel/>

Prime Minister’s Questions

Stephen Flynn (SNP): ... As we await the imminent Israeli incursion into Rafah, where 1.2 million people are sheltering, including 600,000 children, it has been reported that the United States has paused an arms shipment to Israel. The UK will now follow suit, will it not?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman may not realise that the UK Government do not directly provide or ship arms to Israel. When it comes to the situation in Rafah, I have been very clear that we are deeply concerned about a full military incursion, given the devastating humanitarian impact; I have made that point specifically to Prime Minister Netanyahu whenever we have spoken. I will continue to urge all sides to focus on the negotiations at hand, to bring about a pause in the conflict, to release hostages and get more aid in.

Stephen Flynn: Let us be clear: the confidence that Israel has shown in its military ambitions in Rafah stems from the silence of its allies on the Front Benches in this place and elsewhere across the world. We all know that UK arms and tech are supporting Israel’s activities in Gaza, and will be used in any attack on Rafah. Knowing that, and the devastation that will occur, surely the time has come to end our complicity and halt arms sales to Israel.

The Prime Minister: Of course we take our defence export responsibilities extremely seriously. That is why we operate one of the most robust licensing control regimes anywhere in the world. We periodically review advice on Israel’s commitment to international humanitarian law, and Ministers always act in accordance with that advice. That is crystal clear for the House to understand. Following the most recent assessment, our position on export licences is unchanged. I know that the right hon. Gentleman will join me in urging all parties to engage in the negotiations, so that we can see a pause in fighting to get more aid

in, hostages out and bring about a sustainable ceasefire in this conflict.
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-08/debates/C7C51F10-A517-44C6-879C-7A6DD8A6C6B6/Engagements#contribution-DEBFA0FC-5D86-4A72-8614-9778B872E834>

House of Commons Written Answers

Visas: Palestinians

Catherine West (Labour) [24090] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether it is his policy to create a UK visa scheme for Palestinian (a) families displaced in Gaza and (b) orphans from Gaza.

Tom Pursglove: The Home Office is not currently considering establishing a separate route for Palestinians to come to the UK. In any humanitarian situation, the UK must consider its response in the round. Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK must do so via the existing range of routes available.

Immediate family members of British citizens, and those settled in the UK, who wish to come and live in the UK and do not have a current UK visa can apply under one of the existing family visa routes. UKVI is working closely with the FCDO in supporting family members of British nationals to exit from Gaza who require a visa, signposting the necessary steps and expediting appointments at the Visa Application Centre.

Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules and our suitability requirements. Consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances raised and may be taken into account where certain requirements are not met.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24090>

The following three questions all received the same answer

Arms Trade: Israel

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [18619] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to paragraphs 28 and 29 of the summary grounds of the Secretary of State provided in the High Court case between the King (on the application of Al-Haq) v the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, AC-2023-LON-003634, whether any of the pending 28 arms export licences to Israel identified in the Change in Circumstances review have been approved since January 2024.

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [18621] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to paragraphs 28 and 29 of the summary grounds of the Secretary of State provided in the High Court case between the King (on the application of Al-Haq) v the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, AC-2023-LON-003634, if she will provide the dates for when each of the arms export licences to Israel identified in the Change in Circumstances review were issued.

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [18622] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to paragraphs 28 and 29 of the summary grounds of the Secretary of State provided in the High Court case between the King (on the application of Al-Haq) v the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, AC-2023-LON-003634, whether any of the arms export licences identified by the Change in Circumstances Review have been revoked since January 2024.

Greg Hands: The Government is monitoring the situation in Israel and Gaza very closely.

The Government can and does respond quickly and flexibly to changing international circumstances. All licences are kept under careful and continual review and are able to be amended, suspended, refused or revoked as

circumstances require.

HM Government publishes data on export licensing decisions on a quarterly basis in the Official Statistics, including data on outcome, end user destination, overall value, type (e.g. military, other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences. This data is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-13/18619>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-13/18621>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-13/18622>

The Summary Grounds referred to above can be read at

https://www.glanlaw.org/files/uqd/26e1a5_14f16c2640e24bc99211ee41243e9c45.pdf

Israel: Arms Trade

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [23524] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies on the sale of arms to Israel of reports of mass graves in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Reports of the discovery of mass graves in Gaza, including within medical facilities, are deeply concerning. We continue to call on all parties to respect International Humanitarian Law and ensure the protection of civilians.

As part of the Government's robust arms export control regime, we regularly review advice on Israel's commitment to International Humanitarian Law, and Ministers act consistently with that advice. Our position on export licences is unchanged. We will keep the position under review.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23524>

Israel: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24715] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 5 2023 to Question 3978 on Israel: Military Aid, to which Israeli authorities information from the RAF surveillance flights over Gaza announced on 2 December 2023 has been passed.

Leo Docherty: The unarmed UK surveillance aircraft are employed for the sole purpose of hostage rescue. Information relating to hostage rescue is passed to the Israeli authorities which provide the best chance of locating hostages.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-02/24715>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-11-27/3978>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-military-activity-in-the-eastern-mediterranean>

Gaza: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24716] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, whether the (a) International Court of Justice and (b) International Criminal Court has requested that his Department provide it with evidence gathered as part of Royal Air Force surveillance flights over Gaza.

Leo Docherty: No.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-02/24716>

Gaza: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24717] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Royal Air Force surveillance flights have been flown over Gaza since 7 October 2023.

Leo Docherty: We will not comment on detailed intelligence matters.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-02/24717>

Israel: Military Aid

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24718] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the purpose was of each RAF-operated flight to Israel since 7 October 2023.

Leo Docherty: The purpose of the RAF operated flights have included aircraft used to transport Ministers and senior officials conducting diplomatic engagements with Israel.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-02/24718>

West Bank: Violence

Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru) [24501] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps his Department is taking to stop settler violence against farmers 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. The Foreign Secretary has made this clear to his Israeli counterparts, most recently during his visit to the region on 17 April. The Israeli authorities must clamp down on those responsible. On 3 May, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions on extremist groups and individuals for inciting and perpetrating settler violence in the West Bank. The measures impose financial restrictions on the entities and individuals, and travel restrictions on the individuals. The UK will not hesitate to take further action if needed, including through further sanctions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/24501>

Information about the sanctions referred to above can be read at

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

Gaza: Aid Workers

Chi Onwurah (Labour) [24458] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 25 April 2024 to Question 22306 on Gaza: Aid Workers, whether the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs maintains his comment of 5 April 2024 that findings of Israel's review into the killing of aid workers must be published in full and followed up with a wholly independent review to ensure the utmost transparency and accountability.

Andrew Mitchell: As the Foreign Secretary has said, we are carefully reviewing the initial findings of Israel's investigations into the killing of World Central Kitchen aid workers and welcome the suspension of two officers as a first step. Their inquiry so far has highlighted failures in deconfliction processes and the unacceptable conduct of the IDF personnel involved. This must never happen again.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/24458>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-17/22306>

The Foreign Secretary's comments referred to above can be read at

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1776269496333860963

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Israel

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [23525] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has had discussions with the Prime Minister of Israel on the reported finding of mass graves in

Gaza.

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [23526] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with the UN on the reported finding of mass graves in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Reports of the discovery of mass graves in Gaza, including within medical facilities, are deeply concerning. We continue to call on all parties to respect International Humanitarian Law and ensure the protection of civilians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23525>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-24/23526>

House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee

Evidence session: Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

... Q2 **Baroness Morris of Bolton (Conservative):** ... At the beginning of this month, the world was horrified by the killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers in Gaza—three of them British—but, in the past seven months, more than 200 aid workers have been killed and some 500 have been injured. On 18 January, a 1,000-pound smart bomb was fired at the residential compound of Medical Aid for Palestinians, which is a British charity, and the International Rescue Committee, a US-registered non-profit that was housing local staff, their families and the emergency team, which included British doctors. The co-ordinates of the house had been shared with the IDF. Although there were injuries, no one was killed, luckily. An investigation by the Israeli Government and the IDF has so far come up with six different explanations for how this happened. Given the confusion here, can we have confidence in any internal investigations or should we be seeking an independent inquiry?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: First of all, you are right to be very concerned about this particular episode. Obviously, the whole situation in Gaza is deeply concerning and the loss of life deeply regrettable. I raised this occasion, which happened on 18 January, with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 24 January and with Minister Gantz on 6 March, but we have never had a proper, satisfactory explanation. That is very concerning because it goes to the bigger picture, which is that the arrangements in Gaza for deconfliction have not been effective enough. As you say, on this occasion, the co-ordinates were apparently given to the IDF so it should not have been hit—but it was, and we never got a proper explanation.

On your question about whether we can have any confidence elsewhere, all I would say is that, when it comes to the tragedy of the World Central Kitchen attack and the loss of life, the early signs are that it is a proper investigation. Two people have already been fired and the Israelis have admitted that there were both systemic and personal failures. This can give us some hope that better action will be taken in future, I think, but what happened on 18 January was a warning sign. More should have been done when we raised it at the highest levels and said, “Look at what has happened. You need better arrangements in place”.

Q3 **Lord Wood of Anfield (Labour):** ... I want to ask you about UK support for UNRWA. I believe your colleague Andrew Mitchell has announced ... that the resumption of future funding support will be delayed by another month until a further report has been issued. This will puzzle some people because, previously—up to the end of April, which is today—the Colonna report had been sufficient for lots of our allies, such as Canada, France, Finland, Australia, Sweden and the EU, to restore funding. We have not done that. Why has the deadline changed? ...

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: ... First, we are continuing to keep the pressure on

Israel. We identified all of the bottlenecks that were in place. We asked, “Why haven’t you opened the Port of Ashdod? Why haven’t you switched the water back on? Why aren’t we up to 500 trucks a day? Why aren’t there more crossing points open for longer?” We have identified those, and we have pushed and pushed. Obviously, President Biden was very effective in getting pledges from the Israelis to do all those things. ...

On UNRWA specifically, when that happened, it was pretty horrific to know that people working for UNRWA had taken part in the 7 October attacks. Two report processes were set up. One involved Catherine Colonna, a former French Minister, looking at the workings of UNRWA and the sort of things that needed to change. The second involved the Office of Internal Oversight Services—the OIOS—looking at the actual case itself. As I think I said right at the beginning, I would like to see how both reports are progressing before we recommit. I said that knowing that UNRWA has plenty of money to keep it going because it is a vital platform in Gaza; there are not many other ways of getting aid around, as you know. So I think that that is perfectly reasonable.

We have not particularly changed our deadlines. We have said that we want to see at least the early parts of both reports—preferably both reports in full—because, not just in the important terms of doing the right thing but in parliamentary terms, I think that a lot of colleagues in both Houses will want to hear that UNRWA is properly policed and properly run, with proper oversight; that it vets its staff appropriately; and that what happened on 7 October with their participation could not happen again. ...

Q4 Lord Wood of Anfield: ... There have been reports—I should stress that, at this stage, they are only reports—of mass graves at Gaza’s Nasser Hospital. There are reports of bodies, including those of women and children, that have had their hands tied or been buried with hospital gowns on. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser at the White House, has called for an investigation; the UN Commissioner for Human Rights has also done so. What have Foreign Office investigations revealed about this and what action are you taking?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: We have not had any investigations—we are not capable of doing that because we are not in Gaza—but we have said that this needs to be investigated. It is extremely disturbing. I am very nervous about going beyond that because I think that, with some previous events in this conflict, people have jumped to conclusions too quickly. It has had an enormous impact on social media and elsewhere. We need the Israelis urgently to get to the bottom of what happened before going further.

Q5 Lord Grocott (Labour): ... we all know from experience that, when this dreadful war comes to a conclusion, the chances are that the world community will move on to the next crisis and the fundamental problems of Israel and Palestine will go on the back burner and will not be addressed. My question is about post-war reconstruction and governance. What reassurance can you give us that serious thought and consideration are being given, and plans put in place, by the international community to decide how Gaza will be governed and where the money for the reconstruction is going to come from?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: I was in Saudi Arabia yesterday meeting with Foreign Ministers from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. I should say that actually I have quite a lot of confidence that this will not slip off the front pages when this conflict is over because all the neighbours, friends of Israel and Palestine come to the same conclusion, which is, of course: we want to bring the conflict to an end, we have got to deal with the threat of Hamas, and you have got to have moves towards a secure Palestinian state but also a secure Israel. I think so many parties to this understand that there is no long-term peace, security and stability in the Middle East without a solution to the Palestinian question. So if you look at, for instance, what the Saudis are trying to do with this normalisation deal with Israel, that is obviously a huge step for Saudi Arabia and a big step for Israel, but part of it would be the creation of a Palestinian state and a horizon

towards that basis.

Again, if you talk to the Egyptians and the Jordanians, and, if you talk, frankly, to other Europeans, there is an acknowledgement that huge efforts were made around the time of Oslo and all those things that you will remember. Latterly, there was a sense that it was just too difficult and it could not get done and we should focus instead on getting aid to the Palestinians and all the rest of it. Without solving this problem, we are never going to get the long-term peace and security we need. ...

On the issue of reconstruction, what has to come first is trying to build up the concept of what happens after the conflict ends, which is what we were talking about yesterday. How do you build up the new Palestinian Authority, the technical Government they have created? How do you get it back into Gaza? Having got it back into Gaza, how do you help it with the reconstruction work? How do you deal with the issue of security on day one after the war is over? All those things need to be solved. Of course, everyone is thinking that we are already talking to people about reconstruction and who pays and for what and all the rest of it, but it would be quite hard to really progress those conversations until people know the war is over, who is running Gaza, how is it working and the rest of it. But a lot of work is going into that.

Lord Grocott: So much as well is invested in a two-state solution. I cannot remember how many Foreign Secretaries of both parties have had that “get out of jail free” card, to say we want a two-state solution. Obviously, recognising Palestine is absolutely fundamental to that. I just wonder, and I do not want to be too pessimistic, but this committee seven years ago did an inquiry into the Middle East. It said: “On its current trajectory, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is on the verge of moving into a phase where the two-state solution becomes an impossibility and is considered no longer viable by either side. The consequences would be grave for the region”.

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: You are right. Also, to reinforce that, first of all, it was getting harder because of the settlement-building by Israel in the West Bank. Technically creating the Palestinian state has got harder. We have to think about that. I support the Abraham accords, which was a number of Arab states normalising their relations with Israel, and that was a positive step forward, but some people looking at that thought, “Oh, well, we can sort of create peace between the Arab world and the Israeli world without fixing the Palestinian problem.” That was a mistake. You have to fix the Palestinian problem. Now it has got harder but is not impossible. So we have to use the horror of what is happened to try and push forward this agenda. As we do so, there can be a tendency to think that recognition sort of brings about the state. It does not. Recognition is an important part of helping to give the Palestinians a perspective towards statehood but it does not create a state just by everybody recognising it. You have got to set out the things that actually create a state, a Government and their ability to govern. There must be agreement in some way with the Israelis about their security. That is because a two-state solution cannot happen unless the Israelis feel secure in their own state. All these things are linked but there is more purpose behind it than for a while and we must not miss this opportunity. ...

Q6 Baroness Crawley (Labour): ... So much of the instability in the world leads back to Iran and its proxies. ... We welcome the Government’s emphasis in the new sanctions against Iran on targeting threats on UK soil, contravening shipping and the Iranian drone programme. But many of us across party, within Parliament and outside, remain perplexed as to why the Government is still refusing to proscribe the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation. ...

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: ... All the things we need to do to put pressure on Iran and make sure that where they act illegally we can act against them are in place through our sanctions regime that we have enhanced, and we have sanctioned the IRGC in its entirety. I asked law enforcement, police, intelligence services and others: is this

extra step of proscription necessary in order to take further action against these people when they do the things that we disapprove of? The answer is no. There is a disadvantage, to be frank about it, from proscription, which is that it would effectively end diplomatic relations. While our diplomatic relations are pretty terse ... we are actually able to have that conversation. When it comes to trying to stop the escalation of the conflict and to delivering a very direct message to the Iranians—putting it in the most blunt way I can—I want to have that conversation myself. I do not want to ring up my French counterpart and say, “Could you message the Iranians with this message?” ...

Sometimes I find with countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Iran, they send a message to the Iranians, who then sometimes ring me up and say, “What do you think they meant?” I do not want to be in that position. I want to have that very direct conversation. But I completely agree with the premise of your question about the dangers that we face. This is not a question of facing dangers in Gaza or Ukraine, although that is happening. Think about our own country: in the last few months, we have had the appalling situation of China spying on our Electoral Commission and cyberattacks on Members of Parliament. We had the situation just a few days ago of what is alleged to be a Russian sabotage attack on a warehouse in east London. And of course, we have the situation with Iran where it was effectively paying thugs to try and kill people that work for Iran TV. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14758/html/>

The Colonna report, referred to above by Lord Wood of Anfield, can be read at

https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf

The Committee report referred to above by Lord Grocott can be read at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldintrel/159/159.pdf>

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Foreign Affairs

Westminster Hall Debate

Countering Iran's Hostile Activities

col 331WH Margaret Hodge (Labour): ... It is now almost a month since we woke up to the news that Iran had launched 300 drones and missiles at Israel, following Israel's attack on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps leaders in Damascus. That was the first direct attack by Iranians on Israel's soil in the horrendous conflict that is taking place in the middle east, but it sits within a wider context of the threat that Iran poses not just to Israel, but to Britain and to our western allies. ...

Mostly, Iran works through its agents. At their heart is the IRGC, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. ...

In Iran, the IRGC is renowned for its brutality and violence, for undermining human rights and democracy, and for being a terrorist paramilitary organisation that acts as the ideological custodian of the Islamic Republic. But its influence extends to Britain and to our allies. Since the fatwa against Salman Rushdie in 1989, the IRGC has targeted British nationals and Iranian opposition activists living in exile here on our soil. In 2022, the head of MI5, Ken McCallum, warned that Iran's intelligence services had made at least 15 credible threats to kidnap or even kill individuals living here in Britain. ...

col 332WH A recent report by Reporters Without Borders says that London has become a “hot spot” for transnational repression. Iran also seeks to influence public opinion by spreading propaganda. There are concerning ties between the IRGC and local Islamic centres in cities such London, Manchester and Glasgow. According to Policy Exchange,

the Islamic Centre of England, which is located in a converted cinema in Maida Vale, is the centre of Iranian influences in the UK. The head of the centre is directly appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei. Senior clerical figures travelled freely from Iran to the centre in the UK to voice their repressive ideology, while at the same time Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was languishing in a prison in Iran.

Similarly, the Kanoon Towhid Islamic centre in west London is used as a meeting place for the Islamic Students Association of Britain. There, IRCG commanders lecture students on the evils of Israel and its western allies. “Death to Israel,” proclaimed one IRCG commander, who also claimed the holocaust was “a lie and a fake”.

Another claimed that they are engaged in “an apocalyptic war that will end the lives of Jews”.

All that is going on within our shores, in our communities and places of worship in Britain. That is just a small part of the nefarious activities in which Iran is engaged, which also include providing weapons to Russia in Ukraine, and to Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis in the middle east. Even worse, our financial institutions are facilitating Iran’s wrongdoing.

Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative): ... It is quite clear, through links that I will set out later, that the Hamas attacks were organised by the IRGC. That came at a time when Russia had been under pressure in Ukraine. Iran has links to the Russians and this has taken the pressure off them, as most of the focus has gone to Gaza. Does the right hon. Lady agree that, on a wider front, this is an absolute threat to us all?

Margaret Hodge: I absolutely take that point. ...

col 333WH In February, the *Financial Times* revealed that two of the UK’s largest banks—Santander and Lloyd’s—had provided accounts for firms connected to Iran’s state-controlled Petrochemical Commercial Company. US officials believe that that company has funnelled hundreds of millions of dollars to the IRGC, and that it has worked with Russian intelligence agencies to raise money for the Iranian proxy militia. Money in the hands of rogue states and terrorists is a deadly weapon. ...

I am afraid that our response so far does not match the scale of the threat we face. ... I call on the Government to act firmly and proscribe the IRGC as a terrorist group. Action against what is clearly a hostile state-sponsored threat is long overdue.

Secondly, the Government must ramp up their efforts to impose sanctions on the members of the IRGC. ... Imposing sanctions on IRGC agents, or other associated entities, would allow us to freeze their UK assets, deport those without UK citizenship, and prevent any UK persons from dealing with them. ...

Thirdly, we must ensure full transparency over who owns or controls UK companies, properties and trusts so that all the assets and individuals associated with the IRGC can be appropriately referred to the enforcement authorities. ...

col 334WH **Iain Duncan Smith:** ... we are dealing with a regime that brooks absolutely no dissent and no discussion with anybody in Iran, except for with those who are part of its brutal Administration. ... Beyond immediate threats to UK residents and their family members in Iran, recent media reports show that Iran is using UK-based institutions to spread propaganda and assert its influence. ...

In November 2023, *The Times* reported: “Supporters of the Iranian regime have attended pro-Palestine marches in London, handing out leaflets citing the supreme leader’s calls”—the calls of Ayatollah Khamenei—“for the eradication of Israel.”

The regime has never been other than utterly clear that it sees Israel, and Jews, as legitimate targets because it considers them to be appalling and therefore it wants to rid the world of them. He has been very clear about it and everybody else has been very clear about it—and there is his support of Hezbollah and Hamas.

Hezbollah’s leader, in response to Iran, has also clarified the chant, “From the river to the sea.” I have heard some people say, “Well, that just means freeing oppressed peoples.” It is not that; it means clearing Israel—the Jews—out of Palestine completely. That message

is, in those people's minds, absolute, so when others chant it, they need to recognise that that is essentially what they are saying. That is all to do with the propaganda used by the IRGC here in the UK.

col 335WH ... there are concerns over links between the Islamic Centre of England in London, Manchester and Glasgow, and Iran's IRGC and the office of the Supreme Leader. ...

All the other entities exist within the Islamic Centre's network, reportedly including the Islamic Students Association of Britain, based in Hammersmith, which is owned by Al-Tawheed Charitable Trust. In August 2023, it was reported that the students association held online meetings where IRGC commanders had addressed students. We have seen videos, including some on the BBC, where people have been clearly lecturing while using the language that the right hon. Lady cited—about death to Jews and the eradication of Israel—and whipping up meetings to become more extreme than they might have been without such interventions. ...

The BBC report in 2024 into the students association named former IRGC commander, Ezzatollah Zarghami—who is sanctioned in the UK ... as having been advertised as speaking to the student group. It was interesting that the BBC concluded that the students association, along with the Kanoon Towhid centre, had been used as platforms by IRGC agents in the UK to promote extremist antisemitic propaganda and incite violence against dissidents from the regime. ...

There is a distinct difference between sanctioning—the Government always say they sanction individuals—and proscribing, which means that if anybody here in the UK is involved in that organisation, they will be committing a criminal offence. Sanctioning is all well and good as far as it goes, but there are many people who operate, never get spotted and do not get sanctioned. The point of proscribing is to catch those who are busy fomenting violence and antisemitic tropes.

Rather than taking forceful action against the Islamic Republic and its associates, the UK Government seem content to allow those responsible for providing financial support for the activities of Iranian entities to operate freely in the UK. ...

We have long known that the Saderat and Melli banks—Iranian commercial banks subject to US sanctions for supporting Iran's IRGC and other military-related Iranian entities—have active subsidiaries, as mentioned earlier, in London. In October 2023 it was reported that both banks maintain links to Hamas and the IRGC's Quds Force. ...

In plain view, in open sight, we have Iranian banks providing money to those who wish nothing but harm to Jews here in the UK, to any representative of Israel, to the UK state itself and all those here in Parliament who believe in human rights and the rule of law. ...

col 336WH According to a February 2024 report by the *Financial Times*, Lloyds Bank and Santander UK participated in a sanctions evasion scheme backed by Tehran's intelligence services. ...

col 337WH Militarily, Iran also provides the key support for Russia. ... Iran's diverse drone and loitering munitions fleet has become integral to Russian strategy. ...

Iran's nuclear advancement and its military assistance to Russia increase the odds that President Putin, with the right incentives, will seek advantage in assisting Iran with nuclear breakout, transferring advanced military technology and supporting Iranian intelligence activity in Europe and the UK. ...

col 338WH It is also worth pointing out that, in 2022, Iran bought \$2.12 billion-worth of machinery from China, as well as \$1.43 billion-worth of electronics. That tight exchange between these totalitarian states is being cemented and expanded ...

My first recommendation is to proscribe the IRGC as a terrorist organisation, which would make it a criminal offence for any UK citizen to deal with it. During the Prime Minister's campaign to be leader, he stated back in August '22 that the IRGC proscription "must now be on the table", and in December 2022, he vowed unequivocally that he and the Home Secretary would utilise "the full range of tools at our disposal to protect UK citizens from

the threat of the IRGC". ...

My second recommendation to my hon. Friend the Minister is to use the breadth of the sanctions regimes to target the wide range of actors involved in human rights violations and other hostile activities committed by the Iranian regime, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and their agents in the UK and internationally. ...

My third recommendation is to encourage the prompt and effective investigation of any individuals or entities involved in human rights violations where there is a link in the UK, and highlight the legal pathways available to target those persons and confiscate any assets illegally obtained. My final recommendation is to increase resources for the UK's enforcement agencies to allow them to build capacity for investigating and prosecuting entities involved in the commission of international human rights violations, as well as violations of UK sanctions against Iran and the link between the two. ...

col 339WH It is long overdue that we call time on the proxy actor that sits in the middle east with the support of other totalitarian regimes such as Russia and China—on its behaviour, activities and foul funding of the most awful terrorist organisations we have ever seen, which absolutely devastate their own economies. Imagine how much the money that has been given to Hamas by various entities, including Iran, could have benefited the people in Gaza needing hospital treatment, roads and proper sewerage by now had it not been used for weapons, tunnel building and attacks on others. ...

340WH Sharon Hodgson (Labour): ... Very often, when the case is made for why the IRGC must be proscribed, we focus on the havoc it has wreaked across the middle east in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere. That is particularly understandable in light of the events of the last few months, as Gaza, Israel and southern Lebanon have become the scene of death and destruction, in large part due to Iran and its proxies. ... However, it also poses a growing threat to us here in the UK ...

Matt Jukes, the head of counter-terror policing, has made it clear that no fewer than 15 Iranian plots to kill or kidnap people on British soil have been uncovered in just the past two years. Meanwhile, MI5 has reported that Iran's "aggressive intelligence services", including the IRGC, have "ambitions to kidnap or even kill British or UK-based individuals perceived as enemies of the regime." ...

Equally troubling is the fact that the IRGC and other Iranian agents are known to exercise soft power on behalf of the Iranian regime. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Barking mentioned, the Charity Commission has in recent years investigated the Islamic Centre of England in Maida Vale, giving it an official warning in 2022. That followed two events held at the charity's premises in 2020 that eulogised Major General Qasem Soleimani, who was subject to UK sanctions, and that may have placed individuals present in breach of the Terrorism Act. We have also seen reports of IRGC commanders speaking to British students to encourage and incite antisemitic attacks. At least eight IRGC leaders have addressed British student audiences since early 2020. One commander who spoke said the holocaust was "fake", boasted of training al-Qaeda terrorists and urged his audience to join "the beautiful list of soldiers" who would fight and kill Jews in the incoming apocalyptic war. Another IRGC commander invited to speak by the Islamic Students Association of Britain claimed Jews "created homosexuality" and that students should see themselves as "holy warriors", promising that the "era of the Jews" would soon be at an end.

Just this year, a BBC report on the same organisation found that a former IRGC commander, Ezzatollah Zarghami, had spoken to students. He is reported to have previously "boasted of training Hamas in Gaza prior to the 7 October attacks", and in an interview on Iranian state TV, he described how "he had provided Hamas with missiles."

col 341WH Evidence of the IRGC's support for terrorism across the middle east is abundant and undisputed. Indeed, it has been painfully clear since 7 October. Now we have growing evidence of the IRGC operating in our own country, under the Government's nose and seemingly at will. ...

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... On 13 April 2024, Iran launched some 330 drones and missiles against Israel in a retaliation for an attack on what it said was a consulate. I was in Israel the week after Easter and had some talks with the Israel Defence Forces. That building in Syria was not a consulate; it was a terrorist organisation base where attacks across the whole of the Middle East were planned. What Israel did was destroy a terrorist building and those in it, and they were right to do so. By taking out terrorist organisations, such as the IRGC, it ultimately stops attacks on innocent people.

col 342WH The Israeli Defence Forces say that 99% of drones were intercepted and that minimal damage was inflicted. One Israeli civilian was severely injured by falling debris. Let us not allow the fact that the Iron Dome and Israeli defences were successful in preventing greater loss of life distract from the fact that the message from Iran is clear: its evil intention is to destroy, maim and kill. It is not simply backing terrorist Hamas; it is involved, and as such our response must be clear. ...

We have failed to do all we can to sanction Iran for its continued and blatant disregard for its international obligations. This is a country that does not care about anything: it does not care how many people it kills or what mayhem it causes. ...

Melli Bank ... [and] Bank Saderat Iran ... were also found liable by the US federal court in 2021 for a Hamas terrorist attack in Israel in 2015 that left two people dead. These are not just banks but centres of terrorism operated by Hamas, Iran and others whose intentions are pure evil.

A judge ruled that the finance houses had been used by the Quds Force, an offshoot of the IRGC created to liaise with and fund Tehran's proxy militias and to pass funds to terror groups—they can move money around the world to where it needs to be—yet those banks continue to trade unopposed within the borders of this country. ...

The report by the all-party parliamentary group on anti-corruption and responsible tax, which was released just last month, clearly warned MPs and, by extension, the Government, that Iran was using financial assets abroad to advance its interests. ...

col 343WH Iran suppresses human rights and religious freedom to such an extent in that country. ... There are some 1.2 million Christians in Iran, and their human rights are suppressed, as is their religious worship. There are restrictions with threats of arrests, beatings and murder, and mass arrests ...

The IRGC and authorities have deliberately arrested, prosecuted and persecuted Baha'i members by preventing education, health opportunities, employment opportunities, the ownership of property and dignified burials. They even destroy the very graveyards belonging to the Baha'is ...

Women and girls have had their very right to exist taken from them. They have been denied education and employment, and there have been physical attacks and acid attacks on women just because they are not wearing the clothes that the IRGC wants them to ...

col 344WH Iran is the country that supports the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. It has given Russia drones by the thousand to use in its battles against Ukraine. ...

We need action to remind Israel that it is not to be left alone as it was in the six-day war, or at other times in the past when surrounding nations have attempted to wipe it from the face of the earth. We need action simply to do the right thing ...

Chris Law (SNP): ... Since the revolution in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran has repressed the human rights of its own people ... exported terrorism throughout the world and repeatedly shown a blatant disregard for international law. ...

In countering Iran's hostilities, the UK has two essential responsibilities. First, it must ensure that the escalating situation in the middle east is brought to an end. Secondly, it must ensure that Iran does not have the capability to fund, train and equip those who pose a threat to the rules-based order and global security. ...

col 345WH ... events in the middle east since October have changed the context completely; they simply cannot be ignored or discounted. Since November, Iran-aligned

Houthis have launched repeated drone and missile attacks on ships in the crucial shipping channels of the Red sea, the Bab al-Mandab strait and the gulf of Aden in what they say is a campaign of solidarity with Palestinians against Israel's assault on Gaza. This has forced shipping firms to reroute cargo on longer, more expensive journeys around southern Africa, and has stoked fears that the Israeli war in Gaza could spread and destabilise the region. This week, the Houthis in Yemen confirmed that they will continue to target ships heading to Israeli ports anywhere within their range, and cited the looming "aggressive military operation" in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than 1.5 million Palestinians are now sheltering, as a reason behind the group's decision.

Significantly, last month, Iran launched hundreds of drones and missiles at Israel in retaliation for a deadly Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria. The Iranian Government said they considered the issue "concluded", but warned that their next action will be "much stronger" if Israel retaliates.

The Iranian regime is looking to exploit the suffering of the Palestinian people. It has no interest in helping them. The cynical agenda in Tehran is to bring about as much instability in the middle east as possible. ...

We simply cannot pick and choose our collective condemnation for those responsible for the regional escalation of this conflict, be that the bombing of Gaza, missile attacks on Israel, or the targeted killing of diplomats. All parties now need to prioritise de-escalation, to abide by UN Security Council resolutions, and to implement an immediate ceasefire. ... *col 346WH* ... the UK Government must take tangible action and proscribe the IRGC as a first step in countering its ability to support hostile actors in the region, and Iran's ability to act in a hostile manner in the region. ...

col 347WH Finally, we should not forget the ordinary people of Iran, who suffer daily at the hands of the Iranian regime. We all condemn the ongoing flagrant violations of human rights in Iran, including the use of arbitrary detention and the death penalty, the suppression of the rights of women and girls, and restrictions of freedom of religion or belief. ...

col 348WH **Wayne David (Labour):** ... if the Iranian regime is repressive at home in Iran, it is guilty of aggression abroad. In fact, Iran is among the world's foremost state sponsors of terrorism. Iran, through its so-called proxies, is guilty of helping to initiate violence across much of the middle east. Iran has supplied huge support to Hamas in Gaza. It has supplied and supported Hezbollah in Lebanon, and it still does. In Iraq, including in Kurdistan, and in Syria, Iran-sponsored militants have attacked US bases.

Last month, of course, Iran launched an attack on Israel. According to the BBC, the attack included 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles and at least 110 ballistic missiles. Thankfully, we are told that 99% of the incoming barrage was intercepted either outside Israeli airspace or over the country itself. ... The threat continues, however, and there is a need for a more detailed strategy from the United Kingdom and her allies to deal with Iran, especially as Iran is very close to developing nuclear weapons. ...

In 2015, police discovered an Iranian-linked bomb factory in London. Since the beginning of 2022, Iranians have been responsible for at least 15 potential threats to British or UK-based individuals. ...

col 349WH ... the question is: what do we do about the IRGC? I am of the view that legislation should be introduced so that the IRGC is proscribed. The legislation that we have was drawn up some 20 years ago to address terrorist threats, such as al-Qaeda, and if we are serious about addressing the problem of the IRGC, that legislation needs to be revised. The IRGC is a state-sponsored organisation and a new legislative base is required if we are to take action. Our bottom line must be about keeping this country safe ...

col 350WH **The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Nusrat Ghani):** ... Iran's attack on Israel on 13 April was just outrageous. It was dangerous, unacceptable and the latest example of Iran's destabilising activity in the region. Almost all the missiles were intercepted, saving lives in Israel and the region,

thanks to a co-ordinated international effort that included the UK. Yet we should be clear: this was a reckless escalation by Iran, and had this attack been successful, it is hard to overstate just how serious the fallout for regional stability might have been.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary both condemned the attack in the strongest terms. The Foreign Secretary also communicated directly to his Iranian counterpart that the destabilising activity must stop. In the aftermath of the attack, we imposed sanctions targeting key parts of Iran's military, as well as individuals and companies in Iran's drone and missile industries. We have also announced plans to introduce further bans on the export to Iran of components that could be used in drone and missile production. ...

Iran has been fuelling regional escalation through its military, financial and political support to its proxies and partners, including Hamas, Hezbollah and militia groups in Iraq and Syria. We are clear that Iran must cease that support and use its influence to prevent further attacks. That includes in the Red sea, where Iran has provided intelligence and weapons that have enabled the Houthis to target vessels. ...

We know that Iran's hostile activities stretch far beyond the middle east ... Iran is now one of Russia's top military backers and this has prolonged armed conflict in Ukraine, adding to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. In response, we have made 24 sanctions designations in respect of Iran's drone supply to Russia. That is in addition to our wider efforts on the Iranian missile and drone programme. ...

col 351WH Should Iran proceed with providing ballistic missiles or related technology, the UK is prepared to respond swiftly and in co-ordination with G7 allies.

There has been discussion around Iran's nuclear capability. Iran's continued escalation of its nuclear activities is threatening international security ... and undermining global systems of non-proliferation. There is no credible civilian justification for the current state of its nuclear programme. ... We are committed to using all diplomatic options to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, including triggering the UN snapback if necessary. ... Since January 2022, we have identified at least 15 threats backed by Iran towards the lives of individuals based in the UK. The FCDO is working closely with the Home Office and law enforcement partners to actively disrupt and respond to such threats. The Foreign Secretary has made it clear to his Iranian counterparts that the threats are unacceptable and must stop. ...

In late 2023, we introduced a new Iran sanctions regime, which gives us more extensive powers to designate Iran-backed people and entities who threaten us and our allies. ...

We have sanctioned more than 400 people and entities, including... 60 IRGC members. Sanctions have an immediate impact. They freeze and clamp down on economic activity, and they are very clear. ...

I recognise the strength of feeling displayed by hon. Members on the question of proscription ... It is a long-standing position ... that we do not comment on any potential decisions. Yet as the Foreign Secretary outlined to the Lords Select Committee on International Relations and Defence last week, we recognise the malign threat posed by the IRGC and we are taking significant measures to counter it at home and around the world.

col 352WH **Chris Law:** We have all laid out clearly the escalation that has been supported by Israel over the past seven or eight months, particularly around the middle eastern conflict. The Minister might not be able to tell us in detail, but what is the red line beyond which we will all understand that proscription will kick in? ...

Nusrat Ghani: The power—the decision—to proscribe sits with the Home Office and the Home Secretary, so I do not want to speak without authority ...

col 353WH I was surprised to hear, in two contributions, about reporting in the *Financial Times* referencing, in particular, Santander and Lloyds Bank. It was absolutely appropriate to then reference the Financial Conduct Authority and ensuring that those concerns are raised with it to see whether it needs to explore any further. ...

In any debate on Iran, we have to take into account its terrible human rights abuses at

home—the repression of women and girls; the uninhibited use of the death penalty; violent crackdowns on dissenting voices—which will not go unchallenged.

Iain Duncan Smith: ... As I understand it, Iran is not specified as a threat in the integrated review; I think it is described as a “persistent destabilising” influence in the middle east. Does [the Minister] agree with that?

Nusrat Ghani: ... Obviously, I would agree with the exact words of the integrated review, or the integrated review refresh.

The commission is conducting statutory inquiries into both the Islamic Centre of England and the Al-Tawheed Charitable Trust, and we welcome its robust action in taking on those inquiries. ...

We fully understand that a better relationship with Iran depends on the Iranian regime changing its actions. There will be no improvement in our relationship until the regime takes action to reduce its malign influence and activity at home and abroad. We will do everything we can with the powers we have to continue to deter and disrupt the full range of threats Iran imposes on us regionally and internationally. We will continue to take action across Government and with the international community, and we will continue to stand up for our values and for human rights.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-08/debates/1DA1DDDD-3DDE-40FE-82DD-07030F1EE6B3/CounteringIran'SHostileActivities>

The MI5 report referred to above by Margaret Hodge and Sharon Hodgson can be read at
<https://www.mi5.gov.uk/news/director-general-ken-mccallum-gives-annual-threat-update>

The Reporters Without Borders report referred to above by Margaret Hodge can be read at
https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/medias/file/2024/04/Rapport%20Iran%20V6%20Web_2.pdf

The Policy Exchange report referred to above by Margaret Hodge can be read at
<https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Tehran-Calling.pdf>

The Times report referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith can be read at

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/iran-backed-groups-britain-israel-hamas-gaza-war-tb6dxl0ml>

The BBC report and videos referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith and Sharon Hodgson can be read at

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68016330>

The October 2023 report referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith can be read at

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/24481783/iranian-banks-accused-funding-hamas-still-operating-london/>

The Financial Times report referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith can be read at

<https://www.ft.com/content/aac08cf4-a6f2-4e39-995f-23f7fa5ea5ea>

Rishi Sunak’s August 2022 comment referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith can be read at

<https://cfoi.co.uk/conservative-party-leadership-candidates-write-exclusive-letters-to-cfi-supporters/>

Rishi Sunak’s December 2022 comment referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7PnSyvn6nk>

Information about the Charity Commission inquiry into the Islamic Centre of England, referred to above by Sharon Hodgson can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-launches-inquiry-into-islamic-centre-of-england>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-commissions-ongoing-inquiry-into-islamic-centre-of-england-limited>

The judgement referred to above by Jim Shannon can be read at <https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/district-of-columbia/dcdce/1:2019cv01184/206574/62/0.pdf>

The APPG report referred to above by Jim Shannon can be read at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/629df9b4fa8fcb7b11945cc2/t/661ead3ad4c647193bd42758/1713286461043/Economic+Crime+Manifesto+2024+Digital.pdf>

A transcript of the International Relations and Defence Committee evidence session referred to above by Nusrat Ghani can be read at <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14758/html/>

The Integrated Review, and Integrated Review Refresh, referred to above by Iain Duncan Smith and Nusrat Ghani, can be read at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60644e4bd3bf7f0c91eababd/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

and https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641d72f45155a2000c6ad5d5/11857435_NS_IR_Refresh_2023_Supply_AllPages_Revision_7_WEB_PDF.pdf

Information about the Charity Commission inquiry into the Al-Tawheed Charitable Trust, referred to above by Nusrat Ghani can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-to-investigate-al-tawheed-charitable-trust-over-event-held-at-its-premises>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

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

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

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

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

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

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

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

Genocide Determination Bill

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

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

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

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

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

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 6 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