



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Debate

BBC Mid-term Charter Review

col 762 William Cash (Conservative): ...The Government tell us in their review that “impartiality is core to the BBC’s responsibilities under the Charter”.

The BBC ran a £220 million deficit in 2022-23, with an annual income, believe it or not, of £5.7 billion and operating costs of £5.9 billion. In comparison, the democratically elected House of Commons, our bastion of freedom and accountability, together with the House of Lords, merely costs around £847 million a year. Given that the BBC has a massive influence on public opinion and is unelected, that makes the rule of impartiality fundamental to its justification. The Government review also points out that impartiality is one area where the BBC is seen by surveys to be “less favourably compared” in the provision of news, and exhorts the BBC to improve that and to maintain the trust of the public and the audience. ...

col 763 The decisions put across by the BBC quite often are the result of a kind of centrist viewpoint ... which is inevitably not consistent with the views of the public who pay for the benefit ... of watching and listening to the programmes in question.

The Government review recommends that the BBC publishes more information on how it carries out its work on impartiality and how it responds to Ofcom’s challenge to improve its performance. A new complaints system has been established under the principle of “BBC

First”, but the question remains whether that has worked. The number of complaints made to Ofcom about the BBC’s impartiality has increased, and the evidence is that the BBC is not meeting this challenge. ...

col 764 Bernard Jenkin (Conservative): ... Nobody ever thinks that they themselves are biased, and the BBC does not think it is biased, but it can unconsciously produce a very one-sided approach to a particular issue ...

William Cash: ...The mid-term review does not, in my opinion, provide a proper system for determining breaches of impartiality, and allows the BBC and Ofcom undue latitude in interpreting what the words “due impartiality” mean, leaving the BBC as its own judge and jury. Indeed, in the past year, the new BBC editorial complaints unit—otherwise known as the ECU—has upheld only one impartiality complaint. ...

Ofcom’s own figures indicate that complaints relating to bias make up as much as 39% of the complaints, and complaints about misleading and dishonest content make up a further 26%, amounting to approximately 800,000 complaints about bias since Ofcom took over. Of the 155 complaints upheld or partly upheld by the new ECU system, only 33 were accepted as relating to bias, which is an absurd and minuscule proportion. ...

col 765 A mere 56% of the public now believe that the corporation is impartial. The BBC refuses to engage with complaints that do not refer to single programme items, and there is a lack of comprehensive research into audience perceptions of bias.

I noticed an important letter in *The Daily Telegraph* on 23 January this year from Baroness Deech, a distinguished Cross-Bench peer and King’s counsel who was a governor of the BBC from 2002. Regarding the publication of the mid-term review in January, she wrote that “Complaints are seen by the BBC as very sensitive matters, threatening the independence of the editors: witness the lengths to which it has gone to keep secret the Balen Report on its bias against Israel.”

She argues that “The best way to handle complaints would be to appoint an independent ombudsman from outside the media industry, supported by experts on the topic at issue.” I believe she is right. She confirms that “Ofcom is heavily staffed by former BBC and media professionals who may be as touchy as their current counterparts at the notion of bias at the BBC.” ...

col 767 What the corporation desperately needs is more political diversity. One of the problems is the BBC’s hiring policy, which should be seeking out journalists, researchers and programme makers with divergent views if they are genuinely to present commentary on a fair and unbiased basis. ... This can be seen, for example, by the total failure ... to restrain the likes of Gary Lineker from making political statements ... The same applies to outrageous examples of aggressive interviewing, far beyond objective questioning, that have recently centred on the Hamas-Israel conflict. ...

col 782 John Nicolson (SNP): ... Most BBC journalists, I sincerely believe, try to be fair and impartial. They sometimes fall short. ... I do not believe for one moment that journalists go to work daily with the objective of spreading disinformation. ...

col 786 Thangam Debbonaire (Labour): ... It is important to be guided by evidence. Of course, it is right that the BBC is impartial, and that there is a process for assessing that impartiality; that is the only way in which the BBC will remain the UK’s most trusted source of news and, some would claim, the world’s most trusted source. It should therefore be noted that Ofcom has upheld only one complaint against the BBC regarding impartiality in the eight years since the beginning of this charter. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/0DE056A6-2DFB-44F1-8F9F-07DBFDAB139D/BBCMID-TermCharterReview>

The Mid-term Charter Review, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65af9545fd784b0010e0c6dc/E02987480-CP_999_BBC_Mid-Term_Review_Web_Accessible_1.pdf

Baroness Deech's letter to the Telegraph, referred to above by William Cash, can be read at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2024/01/23/letters-sick-resort-drastic-measures-to-get-gp-treatment/>

House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

Lucy Powell (Labour Co-op): I was pleased to join the Leader of the House this week to launch a guide for Members and candidates, co-ordinated by the Antisemitism Policy Trust, on tackling conspiracy theories. Although the existence of conspiracy theories is nothing new, their reach, risk and repercussions are ever increasing. I encourage colleagues to read this important guide.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/56141A16-D037-4238-B54C-2F976C37E8CC/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-5E67C635-C27B-46EE-B044-51896926158C>

The Guide referred to above can be read at

<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Conspiracy-Theory-Guide.pdf>

Business of the House

Michael Ellis (Conservative): While the Prime Minister is today rightly meeting university vice-chancellors to warn them of their duty of care towards Jewish students, the National Union of Students has passed a so-called non-binding motion seeking to expel the Union of Jewish Students. To ban Jews because they are Jewish is pure Nazi ideology, and it gives the lie, frankly, to those who claim that their anti-Zionism is not antisemitism. This issue is a national crisis and it goes to the future of the rule of law in this country, and it is one of the myriad examples of the grotesque antisemitism that we are seeing in national life. Will my right hon. Friend join me in calling for cross-party consensus in supporting the Prime Minister in the work that he is rightly doing with universities and others to stop antisemitism on campus?

Penny Mordaunt: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for raising this very important matter. I am pleased that the meeting between the Prime Minister, the Education Secretary and university vice-chancellors is going on today. We know from recent research that there are universities that do this really well—that treasure all their students and want an environment on campus in which people can learn and live their best life. Sadly, that is not happening on all campuses. The conduct by the NUS, and by particular students in it, is nothing short of grotesque, and I am sure that Members in all parts of the House would agree on that point. It is absolutely vital that we push back against the growing trend of increased antisemitism. I think that I speak for most, if not all, hon. Members when I say that we are supportive of any measures that will do that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/56141A16-D037-4238-B54C-2F976C37E8CC/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-CEE902D1-A01D-43C9-9CF2-7E72BB53011B>

Information about the Prime Minister's meeting with Vice-Chancellors, referred to above, can be read at

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

House of Commons Written Answer

Religion: Secondary Education

Jim Shannon (DUP) [24473] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of studying religious education at key stage (a) 4 and (b) 5 on the educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

Damian Hinds: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

It is mandatory for state-funded schools to teach religious education to all pupils to age 18, subject to parents having a right to withdraw their children from all or part of the subject. However, it is not mandatory for schools to teach the religious studies GCSE or A level. The department has not assessed the impact of studying religious education at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 on the overall educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/24473>

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Letter to the Justice Select Committee on prosecuting hate crime and offences that occur during protests: Stephen Parkinson, DPP

The conflict in the Middle East and protests that followed have undoubtedly resulted in surges in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crime, alongside disturbing scenes of support for proscribed terror groups. This has understandably caused those communities to feel deep concern and fears for their safety. I am writing to set out the action that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has taken in response to the increase in these despicable crimes.

The right to public expression and the right to protest must be upheld, but when actions verge into criminality, we will use every offence and legal route in the pursuit of justice. The law gives the police and prosecutors many offences to consider in respect of hate crimes including public order offences, racially or religiously aggravated offences, and terror offences.

The CPS published our quarter three data last month which covered the three-month period from October to December 2023. Figures from this period – which directly correlate with the conflict in the Middle East – showed that the CPS authorised 9.5 per cent more charges for hate crime compared to the three months before. In total, 2,673 people were charged in the period October to December, an increase of 294 police referrals, of which 240 were racial or religiously flagged hate crimes. The total number of prosecutions for the year was 12,737, which resulted in 10,828 convictions. The CPS authorised prosecution in 88% of all cases referred to it by the police, against an average for all crime of 80%.

Recent examples of successful prosecutions for serious offences motivated by hatred include:

- A Brighton teenager who shared extreme right-wing videos, possessed bomb instruction manuals and plans for an attack on a synagogue [was found guilty of terrorism offences](#).
- A teenage right-wing supremacist was [sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment](#) after he was convicted of planning to disguise himself as an armed police officer and kill Muslims worshipping at nearby mosques.

The CPS has been working closely with the police in relation to protest activity: our specialist prosecutors have been in police control rooms, giving front-line officers the expert, real-time legal advice they need to act quickly and confidently.

We are listening to the communities we serve and are continually engaged with respected partners such as the Jewish Community Security Trust and Tell MAMA.

Our commitment to tackling hate crime and criminality that occurs during protests is unwavering and we stand ready to apply the law without fear or favour. We are planning additional engagement with Parliamentarians over the coming months to discuss this work and will be in touch about future events in due course.

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/letter-justice-select-committee-prosecuting-hate-crime-and-offences-occur-during-protests>

The data referred to above can be read at

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/publication/cps-data-summary-quarter-3-2023-2024>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): My right hon. Friend indicates in provisional business for the week after next the remaining stages of the Holocaust Memorial Bill. She is familiar with early-day motion 711.

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

Will she arrange, at least seven days before the House returns to the Holocaust Memorial Bill, for there to be answers to the questions on recurrent costs, the total capital costs, the amount of money going to education and how much the cost of the project has risen in the last year?

Penny Mordaunt: ... As I always do, I shall ensure that the Ministers in charge of the Bill have heard his specific requests and that the business managers take his asks into account.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/56141A16-D037-4238-B54C-2F976C37E8CC/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-F0063034-11D8-4F28-9715-CE0FAC46B49C>

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust

80 Candles for 80 years

... For Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2025 we will create a digital exhibition of 80

bespoke candleholders that will be designed and created by communities across the UK ... that showcase the life of an individual or a community persecuted by the Nazis. This could be someone [Jewish](#) or someone from one of the [other groups persecuted by the Nazis](#), such as the Roma, disabled people, or gay people.

The final 80 candleholders will be showcased in a digital exhibition and can also be part of your local HMD activities. ...

The project combines art, learning and community collaboration. The 80 communities selected to take part will be provided with £40 in vouchers to aid in the creation of their candleholder. They will also be provided with a list of suggested individuals or communities whose life stories they can learn about and use to provide inspiration for the look and design of their candleholder – this will not be a finite list and groups will be able to choose individuals or communities who were persecuted by the Nazis that are not on the list. ...

Finally, the communities selected will each be asked to collaborate not only in the creation of the candleholder but in committing to undertaking two acts of social good. These acts of social good will support [the theme of HMD 2025, For a Better Future](#). We will provide a range of possible actions to take to stand up to bigotry, racism and hatred, or to support individuals who have experienced persecution just for being who they are. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/80-candles-for-80-years/>

HMD 2025 Theme: For a Better Future

... 80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) has increased significantly in the UK and globally following the 7 October attacks in Israel by Hamas and the subsequent war in Gaza. Extremists are exploiting the situation to stir up anti-Muslim hatred in the UK. Many UK communities are feeling vulnerable, with hostility and suspicion of others rising. ...

Today, Holocaust distortion, denial and trivialisation are all increasing. Holocaust denial is any attempt to deny the Holocaust happened, whilst Holocaust distortion is where the Holocaust is acknowledged to have happened, but the extent or nature of the Holocaust is questioned, minimised, trivialised or even inverted – for example, where Jews today are likened to Nazis. Holocaust denial and distortion are both forms of antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) and should be confronted. 80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as living witnesses rely on us to carry forward their legacy, silence must not be an option.

This Holocaust Memorial Day, we all have an opportunity to take action for a better future. A better future where people are not suffering prejudice or persecution because of their faith, ethnicity or other characteristic. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.hmd.org.uk/what-is-holocaust-memorial-day/this-years-theme/>

TOP

Israel

See also the CPS letter “on prosecuting hate crime and offences that occur during protests” that is included in the Home Affairs section above, and Commons written answer 24680 “USA: Demonstrations”, and Commons Foreign Affairs Committee session “The UK’s international counter-terrorism policy” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Oral Answers

International Humanitarian Law: Israel-Palestine Conflict

Mary Glendon (Labour) [902704] What recent discussions [the Attorney General] has had with Cabinet colleagues on compliance with international humanitarian law in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Debbie Abrahams (Labour) [902705] What recent discussions [the Attorney General] has had with Cabinet colleagues on compliance with international humanitarian law in relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The Attorney General (Victoria Prentis): As all Members know, the Law Officers' convention means that I cannot disclose outside Government whether or not I have provided advice, or the specifics of such advice, but it is no secret that we continue to call for international humanitarian law to be respected and for civilians to be protected.

Mary Glendon: It is more than three months since the International Court of Justice issued its interim ruling on the Gaza conflict and set out steps that Israel must take in order to protect civilian life. The Netanyahu Government have, as yet, failed to comply with that ruling, but our Government have still not come out publicly and urged them to do so. Will the Attorney General take the opportunity today to call on Israel to take the steps ordered by the Court?

The Attorney General: This Government firmly respect the role and the independence of the ICJ. Its ruling, or order, called for the immediate release of the hostages and referred to the need to get more aid into Gaza, and that is exactly what the Government are also calling for.

Debbie Abrahams: The ICJ ruling also declared that there was a "plausible right" to be protected from genocide, and following the urgent question to the Deputy Foreign Secretary on Tuesday I cited United Nations international law relating to that. When there are concerns about a potential genocide taking place, those are the circumstances in which the sale of arms should be withdrawn. Can the Attorney General tell me, and my constituents—as this is a massive issue for thousands of people across the country—exactly when the Government will come out and recognise both international law and the risks that we take in breaching it?

The Attorney General: This Government believe very firmly in international law. On 9 April, the Foreign Secretary announced that our position on export licences was unchanged. We publish data on our export licensing decisions transparently and on a quarterly basis. ...

Emily Thornberry (Labour): We have heard questions about the International Court of Justice, but I want ask some questions about the International Criminal Court. Its chief prosecutor said last week that "all attempts to impede, intimidate, or improperly influence" the Court over its investigations of war crimes in Gaza must "cease immediately".

He was forced to issue that demand after a letter signed by 12 United States senators warned the ICC: "Target Israel and we will target you."

That letter threatened sanctions not just against the ICC's officials, but against its employees, associates and families.

Will the Attorney General join me in condemning those Republican senators for their outrageous actions? Will she also join the chief prosecutor in agreeing that anyone who threatens the ICC simply for doing its job is undermining the very impartiality and independence on which its international mandate depends?

The Attorney General: I thought that the ICC's statement was worthy of note, and I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for bringing it to the House's attention. In his statement, the independent prosecutor was also keen to point out that he welcomed active engagement by Governments and other parties on the work in which he is clearly engaged around the world to ensure that international humanitarian law is

respected and war crimes are not committed. He is a British prosecutor, and we in this Government are proud to work with him; we have been very proud to support him in his work in Ukraine, for example. There are ongoing investigations of what is going on in Israel and Gaza by more than one international court at present, and I think it is difficult to speculate on specific outcomes. ...

Brendan O'Hara (SNP): The Attorney General will be aware of the Government's grounds of defence in the ongoing case of *Al-Haq v. the Secretary of State for Business and Trade*, in which the FCDO lawyers admitted that the "inability to come to a clear assessment on Israel's record of compliance" with international humanitarian law "poses significant policy risks". What is the Attorney General's assessment of that submission? Given the FCDO's concerns about Israel's compliance with IHL, what has she said to her Cabinet colleagues who are worried that the issuing of arms export licences could make the UK Government complicit in breaches of international humanitarian law and the arms trade treaty?

The Attorney General: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I cannot give my specific legal advice. I cannot share that with the House—it is for the Government alone—but I can say that the Foreign Secretary has reviewed the most recent advice from the IHL cell. That has informed his decision that there is not a clear risk that the items exported from the UK might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of IHL. It leaves our position on export licences unchanged, but that position is kept under review.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/A61C524F-AE7B-4FBA-B067-F0059652D123/InternationalHumanitarianLawIsrael-PalestineConflict>

The International Court of Justice interim ruling (Order) referred to above can be read at
<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

Debbie Abrahams' earlier comments referred to above can be read at
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-07/debates/9A94F5AE-A16B-4060-961C-4E1AF946D531/WarInGaza#contribution-5721B5A3-18AD-4F96-8B1A-4B80060610E1>

The statement from the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, referred to above, can be read at

<https://twitter.com/IntlCrimCourt/status/1786316229688414518>

The letter referred to above can be read at

<https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000018f-4e0e-d759-a9ff-ff4ee9420000>

The grounds of defence referred to above can be read at

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

Business of the House

Lucy Powell (Labour Co-op): ... Despite serious and fast-moving developments in Israel and Gaza, the Government, again, did not come to the House to make a statement this week. It was only through your granting an urgent question, Mr Speaker, that Members could raise issues. We want an urgent ceasefire and the assault on Rafah stopped. After much delay, the Government rejected the Procedure Committee report on holding Lords Secretaries of State accountable, yet there is clearly widespread support across the House for its recommendations. Rather than the Government simply rejecting them, should the Leader of the House not seek the view of this House and table a motion on the accountability of the Foreign Secretary to this House as soon as possible? ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/56141A16-D037-4238-B54C-2F976C37E8CC/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-5E67C635-C27B-46EE-B044-51896926158C>

The urgent question referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-07/debates/9A94F5AE-A16B-4060-961C-4E1AF946D531/WarInGaza>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43001/documents/213916/default/>

and the Government response at

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44194/documents/219927/default/>

Business of the House

col 696 Ian Mearns (Labour): ... If awarded time on 23 May, we would propose debates on UK arms exports to Israel ...

col 701 George Galloway (Workers Party of Britain): ... Both Front-Bench teams support the continuation of arms sales to Israel, but the great majority of Back Benchers, even on the Conservative side, would like the opportunity to vote otherwise. That has been stopped—stymied—in the past. I hope that she can find a way for the House to freely express its attitude to this question. The Government, and the Labour Front Benchers, might get a rude awakening and a big surprise.

Penny Mordaunt: ... The hon. Gentleman has found the answer to his own question: he has just been able to freely express his view on this matter. As he knows, there are strict rules regarding our arms exports, which are also scrutinised by a Select Committee of this House. That is the Government's policy, and if those lines are breached and there is evidence of that, that policy will kick in. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-09/debates/56141A16-D037-4238-B54C-2F976C37E8CC/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-AAA897AC-EC96-4034-B3ED-2D52B5C8BFFE>

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Civilians

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [22760] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he is having discussions with Gazans living in the UK on Government support for their relatives living in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Palestinians are facing a devastating and growing humanitarian crisis. The UK is playing a leadership role in alleviating that suffering. We more than trebled our aid commitment this past year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

The Government has met several times with the Palestinian Ambassador and Head of Palestine Mission, Dr Husam Zomlot, to discuss the UK's humanitarian response. The Deputy Foreign Secretary last met him on 08 April and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon met him on 27 February.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-19/22760>

Israel Defense Forces: Private Military and Security Companies

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24569] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 24 April 2024 to Question 22165 on Israel Defense Forces: Private Military and Security Companies, for what reason the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed his Department of the number of British Nationals who immigrated to Israel on their own to serve in the IDF in September 2023.

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24570] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 24 April 2024 to Question 22165 on Israel Defense Forces: Private Military and Security Companies, who in his Department did the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs inform of the number of British Nationals who immigrated to Israel on their own to serve in the IDF in September 2023.

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [24571] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 24 April 2024 to Question 22165 on Israel Defense Forces: Private Military and

Security Companies, whether the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has given his Department the names of 80 British Nationals who immigrated to Israel on their own to serve in the IDF in September 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided the number of British Nationals who immigrated to Israel on their own to serve in the IDF. It did not go into specifics on names or dates.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/24569>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/24570>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/24571>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-16/22165>

The data referred to above was provided in an FoI release that is not currently available online.

Gaza: Ceasefires

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [24082] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent progress he has made on helping to negotiate a ceasefire in Gaza.

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. The Prime Minister discussed the current hostage negotiations with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 30 April and expressed his hope that negotiations are concluded to allow hostages to return home as soon as possible.

We are clear that the vital elements for a lasting peace include the release of all hostages; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by an international support package; removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge of Gaza; and a political horizon which provides a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution and ensures Israelis and Palestinians can live in security and dignity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24082>

Gaza: Aid Workers

Caroline Lucas (Green) [24215] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 26 April 2024 to Question 22287 on Gaza: Aid Workers and with reference to the investigation by the IDF which reported on 5 April 2024, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of that investigation into the killing of seven World Central Kitchen aid workers on 1 April 2024.

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.

The Foreign Secretary 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/2024-04-30/24215>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-17/22287>

Gaza: Israel

Imran Hussain (Labour) [24057] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what discussions

(a) he, (b) his Ministers and (c) officials from his Department have had with their counterparts in Israel on the (i) airstrike at Al Mawasi on 18 January 2024, (ii) killings of World Central Kitchen workers in Gaza on 1 April 2024 and (iii) discovery of mass graves at al-Nasser hospital in Khan Younis.

Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary has underlined the need for Israel to ensure effective deconfliction in Gaza and ensure effective systems to guarantee the safety of humanitarian operations. It must take all possible measures to ensure the safety of medical personnel and facilities. The Foreign Secretary has made our position clear to his Israeli counterparts, including during his visit to the region on 17 April, and we continue to raise this with Israel at the highest levels.

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/2024-04-29/24057>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat) [23791] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had recent discussions he has had with (a) the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) and (b) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on (i) getting aid into and (ii) the distribution of aid within Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We are working to get aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air, working with multiple implementing partners including various UN agencies and international and UK NGOs. UK funding has supported the work of partners including the British Red Cross, World Food Programme, UNICEF and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to deliver vital supplies.

The Foreign Secretary has also appointed a Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, who is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza. He maintains regular contact with the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-25/23791>

Gaza: Orphans

Lisa Nandy (Labour) [24024] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had recent discussions with the UNHCR on children in Gaza who have been orphaned as a result of the Israel-Hamas war in the last six months.

Andrew Mitchell: UN experts assess that 17,000 Palestinian children are believed to have been orphaned since October 2023. UNHCR has no mandate to act in the Occupied Palestinian Territories but the UK is supporting a number of agencies who are targeting funding to respond to the needs of these children. The UK's funding to the Red Cross Movement, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Pooled Fund has supported their work to identify unaccompanied minors, provide care options, and in some cases reunited children with family members.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24024>

Israeli Settlements

Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru) [24789] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of links between the Israeli government and Israeli settlers.

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/2024-05-03/24789>

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>

Israeli Settlements

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [24842] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of plans by Israeli settler movement organisations to march to Gaza on 15 May 2024 with the aim of establishing new settlements there.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK policy on settlement expansion is clear: settlements are illegal under international law and only make it harder to progress to achieving peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians. We have called on the Israeli Government to halt seizures of Palestinian lands immediately.

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/2024-05-03/24842>

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>

Occupied Territories: Violence

Caroline Lucas (Green) [24014] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 3 April 2024 to Question 20107 on West Bank: Violence, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on (a) stopping settler violence and (b) holding perpetrators accountable; and what steps he is taking to help prevent settlement expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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.

The UK policy on settlement expansion is also clear: settlements are illegal under international law and only make it harder to progress to achieving peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians. We have called on the Israeli Government to

halt seizures of Palestinian lands immediately.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-04-29/24014>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-22/20107>

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>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

"Setting out a horizon for a Palestinian state should be one of the vital conditions for moving from a pause in the fighting to a sustainable ceasefire." Explanation of vote by Ambassador Barbara Woodward on the General Assembly resolution on Palestinian UN membership, rights and privileges.

... The UK remains firmly committed to a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and the Palestinian people.

As we said in the Security Council last month, we are abstaining on this resolution because we believe that the first step towards achieving this goal is resolving the immediate crisis in Gaza. 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 together to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire.

Setting out a horizon for a Palestinian state should be one of the vital conditions for moving from a pause in the fighting to a sustainable ceasefire. Recognising a Palestinian State, including at the UN, should be part of that process. As my Foreign Secretary has said, "while this shouldn't be at the start of a new process, it doesn't have to be at the very end of the process".

President, we remain deeply concerned about the prospect of a major operation in Rafah. We are clear that we would not support this unless there is a very clear plan for how to protect civilians, who must be safe and able to access food, water and medical care. We have not seen that plan, so in these circumstances we would not support a major operation in Rafah.

The UK is doing all it can to reach a long-term solution to this crisis. In addition to our support for a deal which would secure a pause in the fighting and the immediate release of all hostages, we are 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.

The UK has offered the Palestinian Authority our support as the new Palestinian government implements much-needed reforms. An effective Palestinian Authority is vital for lasting peace and progress towards a two-state solution.

And just as the PA must act, so must Israel. This means releasing frozen funds, halting settlement expansion and holding to account those responsible for extremist settler violence. Last week, the UK announced a second package of sanctions targeting individuals and groups directly responsible for egregious violence against Palestinian civilians. The Israeli authorities must put a stop to this.

President, in conclusion, we will continue to work urgently to bring the Gaza conflict to a sustainable end as quickly as possible, and to build a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution and lasting peace.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/setting-out-a-horizon-for-a-palestinian-state-should-be-one-of-the-vital-conditions-for-moving-from-a-pause-in-the-fighting-to-a-sustainable-ceasefir>

The UK statement in the Security Council referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/we-must-start-with-fixing-the-immediate-crisis-in-gaza-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

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>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon The arson attack against UNRWA's headquarters in East Jerusalem yesterday is completely unacceptable. The violent perpetrators of this attack must be held to account. Israel must ensure the protection of UN facilities and staff. We cannot allow room for extremism of any kind.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1788963968242909186>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon UK condemns attack in Israel on aid trucks making their way from Jordan to the Erez crossing for Gaza. Crucial that aid workers are protected and can conduct their work safely. They must not be attacked for delivering lifesaving supplies.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1788849212915941696>

Ministry of Defence

UK forces airdrop 100 tonnes of aid for Gaza civilians

... The UK has completed its 11th airdrop into Gaza ... reaching the milestone of over 100 tonnes of life-saving aid delivered by air.

Over the course of 11 Royal Air Force flights, the UK has delivered ready-to-eat meals, water, rice, tinned goods and flour, with a total of 12 tonnes dropped into Northern Gaza today. ...

The aid is dropped along the northern coastline of Gaza, with drop zones regularly surveyed to ensure civilians are not harmed. Each flight takes around one hour and British personnel work closely with the Royal Jordanian Air Force to plan and conduct each mission.

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said: Our commitment to delivering large quantities of aid to those most in need is unwavering, this milestone is both testament to that and a demonstration of where our focus lies over the coming weeks and months.

Given the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, we deployed RFA Cardigan Bay to the Eastern Mediterranean to support efforts to build a temporary pier to deliver crucial humanitarian assistance.

We continue to pressure Israel to fully open Ashdod Port as well as more land crossings.

Foreign Secretary David Cameron said: The UK is playing a leadership role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Through our partnership with Jordan, we have now delivered 100 tonnes of life-saving aid by air.

But it is only by land that we will be able to transport the full amount of humanitarian assistance needed. We have seen an encouraging increase in the number of aid trucks getting in, but we must see further action so that more aid gets over the border and is safely distributed.

Royal Navy support ship RFA Cardigan Bay recently set sail from Cyprus to support international efforts to open a maritime aid corridor to Gaza. The ship is providing accommodation for hundreds of US sailors and soldiers building a temporary pier off the coast of Gaza. According to US estimates, this pier will initially facilitate the delivery of 90 truckloads of aid into Gaza and scale up to 150 truckloads once fully operational.

As land routes remain the quickest and most effective means of delivering aid, the UK also

continues to engage with Israel to open more land crossings into Gaza.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-forces-airdrop-100-tonnes-of-aid-for-gaza-civilians>

International Court of Justice

Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel): South Africa submits an urgent request for the indication of additional provisional measures and the modification of previous provisional measures

South Africa ... filed an urgent request with the Court for the indication of additional provisional measures and the modification of provisional measures previously prescribed by the Court in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel).

In its new request, South Africa states that the provisional measures previously indicated by the Court “are not capable of ‘fully address[ing]’ the changed circumstances and new facts on which [its] Request is founded”. It further states that

“the situation brought about by the Israeli assault on Rafah, and the extreme risk it poses to humanitarian supplies and basic services into Gaza, to the survival of the Palestinian medical system, and to the very survival of Palestinians in Gaza as a group, is not only an escalation of the prevailing situation, but gives rise to new facts that are causing irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people in Gaza”.

South Africa requests the Court to indicate further provisional measures and modify the previous provisional measures ... for “the protection of the Palestinian people in Gaza from grave and irreparable violations of their rights, and of South Africa’s rights, under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240510-pre-02-00-en.pdf>

Urgent Request for the Modification and Indication of Provisional Measures Pursuant to Article 41 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice and Articles 75 and 76 of the Rules of Court of the International Court of Justice

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240510-wri-01-00-en.pdf>

United Nations

General Assembly: Plenary

Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), President of the General Assembly’s seventy-eighth session, said that, for almost the entire lifespan of the United Nations, peace in the Middle East, and for the people of Palestine in particular, has remained elusive. Today, this untenable situation continues to deteriorate at an alarming speed — bringing countless innocent victims into its deadly fold and pushing the region further to the brink of full-scale catastrophe. ...

“... The only viable path towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East is through the two-State solution — with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security, in line with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant UN resolutions. Most immediately, he urged the parties to this conflict — with the support of those with leverage — “to do their utmost to secure an agreement of ceasefire that will end the suffering, end the bloodshed, free all hostages, protect innocent civilians and ensure immediate, unhindered access to humanitarian aid, without conditions, for all

who are in dire need”. ...

The representative of the United Arab Emirates, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, introduced the draft resolution Admission of new Members to the United Nations (document A/ES-10/L.30/Rev.1), which recommends that the Security Council reconsider Palestine’s application for full membership in the United Nations, following the United States delegation’s veto against a Security Council resolution, submitted by Algeria on behalf of the Arab Group in April. “By voting in favour of today’s draft resolution, you will demonstrate that the international community refuses to settle for anything less than upholding the legitimate rights of peoples and rejecting double standards,” he said. ... It recommends the Council reconsider and support Palestine’s request, considering the Assembly’s recognition of Palestine’s eligibility, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice dated 28 May 1948 and in accordance with Article IV of the Charter of the United Nations.

Yet this resolution alone does not do justice to the State of Palestine, as it only grants additional rights, meaning that Palestine will remain an observer State without the right to vote in the Assembly or put forward its candidature for United Nations organs. Therefore, he called upon the Council to respond to the General Assembly by issuing a positive recommendation regarding the State of Palestine’s membership. This will let the Assembly decide on Palestine’s admission to the United Nations. The draft resolution also affirms the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination, including their right to establish an independent and sovereign State. It also calls for renewed international efforts to end the Israeli occupation began in 1967, and to reach a just, lasting and peaceful settlement for the Palestinian question. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine said “I stand before you as more than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed, 80,000 have been maimed, 2 million have been displaced and everything has been destroyed.” Palestinians in Gaza are hunted by bombs and bullets in an ever-narrowing space, famine is setting in and, instead of opening crossings, Israel has closed them. “At the time where the world was calling to flood Gaza with humanitarian aid and calling for a ceasefire, Israel imposed a drought,” he emphasized, adding: “Its plan has not changed — destroy and displace.” Recalling that he “has stood hundreds of times before at this podium” — often in tragic circumstances — he underscored that he has never done so ahead of a more significant vote than the one about to take place — “a historic one”. He stressed that, while Palestinians did not write the Charter of the United Nations — nor enact international law — “we just demanded to see them applied to us — and have been, until now, denied their protection”.

Stating that occupation, colonialism, death and destruction are not Palestinians’ fate — they are imposed — he underscored: “But freedom is our sole destiny.” Israel has made clear that it wants to destroy Palestinian Statehood, and he questioned what it means to support a two-State solution if one allows for the destruction of the Palestinian State. Palestine has been — for generations — “the ultimate test for humanity’s ability to live up to its promises”, he stressed, calling on those who invoked the Charter during negotiations to abide by Palestinians’ right to self-determination, which is guaranteed by that document. Voting “yes” today is a vote for Palestinian existence — it is not against any State, but it is against attempts to deprive Palestinians of a State. He added: “In simple words, voting yes is the right thing to do.”

The representative of Israel said that while Holocaust Remembrance Day is commemorated this week, “this shameless body has chosen to reward the modern-day Nazis with rights and privileges”, he said. Today’s destructive vote will only open the doors of the United Nations to the terrorists-supporting Palestinian Authority, which does not even have control of its own territory. Hamas controls Gaza and has also taken over Palestinian neighbourhoods in the West Bank. The group is predicted to win a Palestinian election. “You are about to grant privileges and rights to the future terror State of Hamas,” he said. In the years to come, the Assembly will have to explain how — in opposition to

all morality and the Charter of the United Nations — it supported mass murderers — “the Hitler of our time”. If Hamas rises to power, the Palestinian representative who just spoke here will be recalled, and the UN will have a representative of Hamas sit in this Hall. “Today another travesty is being committed by the Assembly,” he said.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, its membership can be granted to all “peace-loving States”, he recalled, adding: The admission of any such State to membership is decided by the Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. “With today’s vote, you’re totally bypassing the Security Council in violation of the Charter,” he said. The Palestinians are the exact opposite of peace-loving. They have only tried to destroy Israel. The Palestinians indoctrinate their children to murder Israelis and commit terrorism. When Israel defends itself, the Palestinian representative comes here shedding his crocodile tears. When it comes to the lives of Israelis and Jews, the Charter “means nothing to you”, he deplored. “I will hold up a mirror — this is your mirror so you can see exactly what you are inflicting upon the UN Charter with this destructive vote,” he said, and shredded a few pages of a UN Charter booklet before leaving the podium.

The representative of the Russian Federation ... said that seven months ago, another escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict began. Over this time, more than 34,000 people have died in Gaza, mostly women and children, and another 78,000 civilians have been injured. “This monstrously tragic statistic has nothing comparable to it in modern history,” he stressed, adding that if Israel goes ahead with its plan to assault Rafah, where more than 1.5 million have congregated, the consequences will be catastrophic. ...

Against this backdrop, he emphasized that Palestine’s full-fledged UN membership would provide an equal negotiating position with Israel, which received this status more than 75 years ago. ...

... **the representative of Pakistan** said the right of self-determination given to the Palestinian people under the Charter has been trampled on for more than 70 years. ... He noted the Assembly’s 1947 vote that partitioned Palestine. Yet, only Israel became a member of the United Nations and the Palestinian people have been denied their rights. ... The Assembly then adopted the resolution by a recorded vote of 143 in favour to 9 against (Argentina, Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, United States), with 25 abstentions.

Speaking in explanation of vote after the vote, **the representative of Iran** expressed support for the Assembly’s decision today, which represents a “modest, yet crucial step” towards fulfilling the international community’s obligations to Palestinians. Palestine has demonstrated its commitment to peace and its ability to fulfil the obligations contained the Charter of the United Nations ... He stressed, however, that the Israeli regime’s actions render it “ineligible as a peace-loving entity capable of upholding” such obligations. It consistently violates international law, refused to comply with legally binding orders of the International Court of Justice and persists in massacres, war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. ...

The representative of the United States underscored that sustainable peace in the region can be achieved only through a two-State solution, with Israel’s security guaranteed, where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in freedom and dignity. “Unilateral measures at the UN and on the ground will not advance this goal,” he asserted, adding that “this resolution is no exception”. However, he emphasized, “our vote does not reflect opposition to Palestinian Statehood;” instead, it is an acknowledgment that Statehood will come only through a process that involves direct negotiations between the parties. ...

The representative of France ... [said] the two-State solution is the only way to meet both Israel’s security needs and Palestine’s legitimate aspirations for Statehood ... He also expressed opposition to the operation that has started in Rafah, which risks further victims and displacement “at a time where nowhere can be safe in Gaza”. It also risks disrupting

the delivery of aid and, in that context, he condemned Hamas' attack on the Kerem Shalom border crossing and called on all parties to "do everything they can" to protect civilians and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The representative of the United Kingdom said her delegation remains firmly committed to a two-State solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. As stated in the Council in April, her delegation is abstaining from this resolution because it believes the first step to achieving this goal is resolving the immediate crisis in Gaza and securing a deal that gets the hostages out and allows for a pause in the fighting in Gaza. ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

The representative of Syria observed that Israel's crimes in Gaza have led to the death of 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children. "The pain and suffering of the Palestinian people have been met with widespread international solidarity and accompanied by a strong demand to put an end to the genocide perpetrated by Israel," ... Condemning "the barbaric attack" that continues against the Palestinian people and the accompanying and repeated attack on the Syrian people, he demanded an end to this aggression and warned against the danger of attacking Rafah — "the last resort of the people of Gaza".

The representative of Hungary said ... the current resolution is not conducive to easing the situation and finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East ... condemning the 7 October terrorist attack by Hamas that ignited the current war in Gaza and calling for the immediate, unconditional release of the remaining hostages. ...

The representative of Egypt, thanking "all countries who stood by what is right today", noted the results of a vote where all countries held equal footing without the right to a veto. Nevertheless, he said that the crimes committed by the "rogue Israeli war machine" against Palestinians — including mass graves that will "lead, without a doubt, to an angry Arab generation" — have led to a growing sense that there would not have been so many civilian casualties "if those victims were from the aggressor's side — or any other Western countries". ... Underscoring that Palestinians' rights to Statehood and full UN membership are inalienable, he called on all Member States to adopt a resolution that grants such membership as soon as possible.

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/ga12599.doc.htm>

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Admission of new Members to the United Nations (A/ES-10/L.30/Rev.1)

<https://undocs.org/en/A/ES-10/L.30/Rev.1>

The 28 May 1948 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/3/003-19480528-ADV-01-00-EN.pdf>

Article IV of the UN Charter, referred to above, can be read at

<https://legal.un.org/repertory/art4.shtml>

Secretary-General's press conference ahead of the closing session of the United Nations Civil Society Conference

... The fate of Palestinians, Israelis and the entire region hangs in the balance.

I reiterate my appeal for the Government of Israel and the leadership of Hamas to demonstrate political courage and spare no effort to reach agreement to stop the bloodshed – and to free the hostages.

The situation in Rafah is on a knife's edge, as airstrikes continue throughout southern Gaza. Over one million Palestinians, half of whom are children, have crowded in the Rafah

Governate for shelter.

We are actively engaging with all involved for the resumption of the entry of life-saving supplies – including desperately needed fuel – through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.

Meanwhile, our health partners tell us that all the key medical facilities in Rafah could soon become inaccessible or inoperable – including the only dialysis department still operating in Gaza.

Around 100,000 Palestinians are moving north from Rafah, yet humanitarian partners have no tents or food stores left in south Gaza.

A massive ground attack in Rafah would lead to an epic humanitarian disaster and pull the plug on our efforts to support people as famine looms.

International humanitarian law is unequivocal: civilians must be protected.

In particular, vulnerable people unable to relocate from active fighting must be protected wherever they seek shelter – pregnant women, children, the injured, the sick, and older people, and people with disabilities.

International humanitarian law is a must. It must be respected by all parties.

And, of course, what happens in Gaza has profound repercussions in the occupied West Bank, where we see a deeply disturbing spike in settler violence, excessive use of force by the Israeli Defense Force, demolitions and evictions.

All of this speaks to the need for the international community to speak with one voice for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, and a massive surge in life-saving aid. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2024-05-10/secretary-generals-press-conference-ahead-of-the-closing-session-of-the-united-nations-civil-society-conference>

Security Council Press Statement on Mass Graves in Gaza

The following Security Council press statement was issued today by Council President Pedro Comissário Afonso (Mozambique):

The members of the Security Council expressed their deep concern over reports of the discovery of mass graves, in and around the Nasser and Al Shifa medical facilities in Gaza, where several hundred bodies, including women, children and older persons, were buried. The members of the Security Council underlined the need for accountability for violations of international law and called for investigators to be allowed the unimpeded access to all locations of mass graves in Gaza to conduct immediate, independent, thorough, comprehensive, transparent and impartial investigations to establish the circumstances behind the graves.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their demand that all parties scrupulously comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular regarding the protection of civilians and civilian objects.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of allowing families to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives, consistent with international humanitarian law.

The members of the Security Council emphasized the imperative of all parties to immediately and fully implement resolutions 2728 (2024), 2720 (2023) and 2712 (2023).

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15692.doc.htm>

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))

UNSCR 2720, referred to above, can be read at [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2720\(2023\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2720(2023))

UNSCR 2012, referred to above, can be read at [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2712\(2023\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2712(2023))

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Israel/Gaza: Threats against the ICC promote a culture of impunity, say UN experts

UN experts ... expressed utter dismay over statements made by United States and Israeli officials threatening to retaliate against the International Criminal Court (ICC), its officials and members of their families.

“At a time when the world should unite to end the terrible bloodshed in Gaza and seek justice for those unlawfully killed, injured, traumatised, or taken hostage, since October 7, it is distressing to see State officials threatening to retaliate against a Court for pursuing international justice,” the experts said.

On Friday, 4 May, the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) denounced statements that “threaten to retaliate against the Court or against Court personnel” for actions taken by the Prosecutor. The OTP’s statement reminded all individuals that threats of retaliation may amount to an offense against the administration of justice under Article 70 of the Rome Statute. ...

“Threats of retaliatory action violate human rights norms against attacks on justice personnel and exceed the accepted limits of freedom of expression. We call on all States to respect the Court’s independence as a judicial institution and protect the independence and impartiality of those who work within the Court.” ...

In recent weeks, authorities in the United States and Israel have made inflammatory statements concerning the ICC, characterising the Prosecutor’s potential actions as “lawless,” “disgraceful,” and any possible warrants as “an outrageous assault” and “an abomination”. Such comments have persisted for more than a week amid reports that Congressional leaders in the United States are preparing possible retaliatory action, including sanctions on individuals who work for the Court and efforts to de-fund the ICC, should arrest warrants be issued against Israeli officials, and threats from the Israeli Finance Minister to also withhold funds from the Palestinian Authority.

The experts recalled that the ICC has the mandate to investigate and prosecute individuals for the grave international crimes of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

The Court’s judges have authorised the ICC Prosecutor to investigate crimes committed on the territory of the State of Palestine since 2014 by any individual—whether Palestinian, Israeli, or another nationality—and any such crimes committed by Palestinian nationals, including crimes that took place inside Israel. The ICC Prosecutor has stated that his ongoing investigation includes recent events in occupied Gaza and West Bank. ...

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/israelgaza-threats-against-icc-promote-culture-impunity-say-un-experts>

The statement from the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, referred to above, can be read at

<https://twitter.com/IntlCrimCourt/status/1786316229688414518>

Comment by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk on Gaza

I am deeply distressed by the fast-deteriorating conditions in Gaza as Israeli forces intensify airstrikes on Jabaliya and Beit Lahiya in northern Gaza and in parts of Central

Gaza. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are fleeing Rafah after the Israeli Defence Forces ordered further evacuations from the southern city, leading afresh to massive displacement of an already profoundly traumatized population. I am also concerned by reports of indiscriminate rocket fire from Gaza.

Since 6 May, when the IDF issued an evacuation order to Palestinians in eastern Rafah, more than 278,000 people have been displaced. This includes people with disabilities, the chronically ill, older people, the injured, pregnant women, and many others who are physically unable to move without help.

The latest evacuation orders affect close to a million people in Rafah. So where should they go now?

There is no safe place in Gaza!

These exhausted, famished people, many of whom have been displaced many times already, have no good options. Other towns across Gaza, including Khan Younis, which is supposed to receive those who are being displaced from Rafah right now, have already been reduced to rubble, and remain under attack. These are not safe places.

I have repeatedly expressed my alarm about the catastrophic impact of a possible full-scale offensive on Rafah, including the possibility of further atrocity crimes. I can see no way that the latest evacuation orders, much less a full assault, in an area with an extremely dense presence of civilians, can be reconciled with the binding requirements of international humanitarian law and with the two sets of binding provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.

At this desperate moment, exacerbated by acts impeding the entry of humanitarian aid in Gaza through the three crossings, there is a dire shortage of fuel, which is hindering everything – from the movement to distribution of food, operation of hospitals and emergency services, sewage treatment and telecommunications. I am also very worried about the safety of humanitarian workers in the affected areas.

I reiterate. A full-scale offensive on Rafah cannot take place!

All states with influence must do everything in their power to prevent it - to protect civilian lives.

I call on Israel and Palestinian armed groups urgently to agree to a ceasefire, and all hostages must be released at once.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/05/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-gaza>

Comment by UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk on Gaza crossings

I deplore all hostile acts that jeopardise the entry and distribution of critically needed humanitarian aid into Gaza. The handful of land crossings into Gaza serve as lifelines for the supply of food, medicine, fuel and other necessities that must be allowed to reach the despairing and terrified population.

I urge all parties to ensure that crossings for civilians and goods necessary for the survival of the civilian population are not placed at risk through military operations.

Given the particular importance for civilians all across Gaza of the free flow of humanitarian aid, special care must be taken by both sides to ensure that these crossings remain safe and functional, and are neither direct targets of attack nor collaterally damaged.

I repeat my call on all parties to the conflict to lay down their weapons immediately, and to ensure that full, unfettered, and sustained humanitarian aid, commensurate with the needs of all Palestinians in Gaza, is able to reach everyone without delay.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/comment-un-human-rights-chief-volker-turk-gaza-crossings>

Israel's Rafah invasion must stop now, say UN experts

The Israeli military's ground operation targeting eastern Rafah is a culmination of a seven-month long campaign to forcibly transfer and destroy Gaza's population, UN experts warned today.

"The long-threatened Rafah invasion must not be seen as a foregone conclusion," the experts said. "Israel must halt this assault."

On 6 May, as international efforts to negotiate a ceasefire, end the massacre in Gaza and ensure the release of hostages gathered steam, the Israeli military moved forward with an offensive into the southern corner of the besieged Gaza Strip, where around 1.4 million Palestinians are sheltering. Israeli forces shuttered the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, further cutting off life-saving humanitarian aid, supplies and fuel needed to run Gaza's remaining hospitals and water desalination plants.

The experts said the Rafah invasion was yet another flagrant violation of Israel's obligations as an occupying power. "In light of the grievous humanitarian situation on the ground, no evacuation order issued by Israel can be considered compliant with international humanitarian law," they said. International law stipulates that Israel must ensure displaced civilians are protected and have continuous access to food, safe water, and medical assistance.

"This is even more critical when Israel has been warned that its acts may amount to genocide," the experts said. "Further displacement of Gaza's population through evacuation orders or military operations contravenes [binding provisional measures](#) imposed on Israel by the International Court of Justice."

The so-called 'expanded humanitarian area' of Al Mawasi, where the Israeli military has instructed evacuees to go, is already without sufficient food, water, medicine, hygiene products, electricity, shelter and access to education for children; it cannot cope with a population influx. "The forcible transfer of civilians, mostly women and more than 600,000 children—including wounded children—from Rafah pushes Palestinians across Gaza further into critically desperate humanitarian circumstances," the experts said.

Over the past seven months, Israel has repeatedly attacked areas where evacuees were instructed to go.

"While past violations must be duly investigated and accounted for, new abuses must be prevented," they said.

"States with influence over Israel have described any incursion into Rafah as a 'red line'," the experts said. "They must immediately put those words into practice and stop this disastrous campaign by ending the flow of arms into Israel and withholding investment and political support."

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/israels-rafah-invasion-must-stop-now-say-un-experts>

UNRWA

Israeli residents set fire twice to the perimeter of the UNRWA headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem: Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner General

This evening, Israeli residents set fire twice to the perimeter of the UNRWA Headquarters in occupied East Jerusalem.

This took place while UNRWA and other UN Agencies' staff were on the compound.

While there were no casualties among our staff, the fire caused extensive damage to the outdoor areas. The UNRWA headquarters has on its grounds a petrol and diesel station for the Agency's fleet of cars.

Our director with the help of other staff had to put out the fire themselves as it took the Israeli fire extinguishers and police a while before they turned up.

A crowd accompanied by armed men were witnessed outside the compound chanting

“Burn down the United Nations” (see video below from Israeli media).

This is an outrageous development. Once again, the lives of UN staff were at a serious risk.

In light of this second appalling incident in less than a week, I have taken the decision to close down our compound until proper security is restored.

Over the past two months, Israeli extremists have been staging protests outside the UNRWA compound in Jerusalem, called by an elected member of the Jerusalem municipality.

This week, the protest became violent when demonstrators threw stones at UN staff and at the buildings of the compound.

Over the past months, UN staff have regularly been subjected to harassment and intimidation. Our compound has been seriously vandalized and damaged.

On several occasions, Israeli extremists threatened our staff with guns.

It is the responsibility of the State of Israel as an occupying power to ensure that United Nations personnel and facilities are protected at all times.

UN staff, premises and operations should be protected at all times in line with international law.

I call on all those who have influence to put an end to these attacks and hold all those responsible accountable.

The perpetrators of these attacks must be investigated and those responsible must be held accountable.

Anything less will set a new dangerous standard.

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/evening-israeli-residents-set-fire-twice-perimeter-unrwa-headquarters>

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Statement by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Ms. Farida Shaheed on her visit to the United States of America, 29 April – 10 May 2024

... One of my biggest concerns during this visit, as well as of the majority of international human rights mechanisms, is the increasing attacks on peaceful student protests across the country. ...

I have been informed that since October 7, 2023, students have established mass encampments at nearly 40 universities in more than 25 states across the country calling for an end to the financial ties of these educational institutions to corporations linked to the Israel's military operation in Gaza and calling for an immediate ceasefire. More than 2,000 people have been detained as a result of raids by fully armed police on university campuses, including students and professors. Police interventions have been requested or authorized by the institutions themselves, to disperse demonstrators and dismantle encampments.

My interlocutors from several private and public universities reported that most people were detained on charges of trespassing, failure to disperse or refusal to comply with a police order and in some instances criminal charges were brought. Riot units reportedly used tear gas and rubber bullets in clashes with demonstrators, there are reports of violent arrests leading to injuries, including concussions and broken bones requiring hospital treatment, as well as harassment of the protesters. Some police forces continue to guard the surroundings of several universities as a preventive measure. In addition, universities have reportedly taken disciplinary measures against those who participated or plan to participate in the protests, including surveillance of students and staff through high-resolution cameras, university email addresses and other high-and low-tech means, suspensions (leading to an inability to graduate, for example), expulsions, evictions from university housing, cancelation of food support programs and even deportations of

international students. All these measures have inevitably created a chilling effect on the whole academic community and a climate of intimidation.

The most appalling factor is the unequal treatment of protesters depending on their political position. Pro-Palestinian protesters are disproportionately affected by the harsh response, allegedly for their antisemitic views, paradoxically, even if they self-identify as belonging to the Jewish community or represent Jewish student associations. The definition of antisemitism used in these accusations is based on the one proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance conflating criticism of the state of Israel with antisemitism. While all states must prohibit advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to violence, hostility or discrimination, the expression of a critical political opinion is not, and will never be a legitimate ground to restrict freedom of expression. Expressing support for, or opposition to, a specific government, is fully guaranteed by the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and shall not be equal to harassment.

Naturally, any hate speech, including antisemitic and anti-Islamic or anti-Palestinian expression is unacceptable. However, each such individual allegation needs to follow a due process and carefully balance accusations of offensive expression with freedom of speech which is afforded the highest protection in the US Constitution and international human right law. In fact, it is one of the cornerstones of the United States as a country, which has always been proud of its robust tradition of academic freedom. Today, this foundation is crumbling. ...

I would like to specifically highlight the responsibility of the State to respect and protect academic freedom, including the autonomy of academic institutions by virtue of their special role in society, which is underpinned by a range of human rights, including the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association and peaceful assembly. In this context, I am concerned at the political pressure exerted on university administrators and academics to take certain positions and actions regarding the student protests on campuses on the the situation in Gaza. I fear that such pressure and public attacks on the scholars and institutions can result in the repression of free speech and self-censorship, thus damaging academic freedom and the autonomy of universities. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/education/statements/20240510-stm-eom-sr-education-usa.pdf>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

USA: Demonstrations

Martyn Day (SNP): [24680] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his US counterpart on the (a) handling of pro-Palestine protests on university campuses and (b) potential impact of disbanding those protests on (i) free speech and (ii) the right to assembly in that country.

David Rutley: The handling of protests in the US is a matter for US authorities. The Deputy Foreign Secretary has not had any discussions with his US counterpart on the handling of pro-Palestine protests on university campuses or the potential impact of disbanding these protests.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-02/24680>

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee

The UK's international counter-terrorism policy

Q203 Chair (Alicia Kearns, Conservative): ... You joined al-Qaeda in the '90s. I am interested in your view on how al-Qaeda has changed as an organisation since then, particularly in the post-9/11 period. How you think their ideology and objectives have shifted since then and since the emergence of Daesh as part of that?

Aimen Dean (Co-Founder and Director of Operations of Cruickshank & Dean Global Intelligence, former MI6 agent and former member of al-Qaeda): They moved from analogue to digital. ... Then after that they kept changing their objectives, from global to regional to local, and they adapted according to whatever branch they had established in whatever country—such as in Yemen, where they have their own different goals and aspirations, and in Somalia, where there is al-Shabaab, though they have declared their allegiance to al-Qaeda. ...

Q204 Aimen Dean: At the end of the day, I think al-Qaeda was about an idea. It is part of a civil war within Islam, if I can describe it that way. There is a war between those who believe in the nation state as a concept and institution and as the perfect model to live in in the 20th and 21st centuries and those who believe in transnational ideologies ... the pan-Islamic caliphate. ...

Q207 Fabian Hamilton (Labour): I was just wondering whether you can tell us a bit more about the motivations underlying the reasons why people join jihadist terror groups. Have those reasons evolved? Are they more complex now than they were, say, 25 years ago, or since 2001? Is it to do with increasing inequality in society? ...

Aimen Dean: ... no one wakes up one day and decides, "Today, I am going to be a terrorist. I am going to join a terrorist group and go and kill everyone around." ... It all starts with good intentions. The path to hell is paved with good intentions. That is why, in Islamic principles, good intentions are not good enough. You need to have wisdom with it.

However, when I was 16, wisdom was in short supply, and even when you are 26 or even 36, wisdom is still in short supply. That is the role of the elders, but the elders neglect their duties to share their wisdom with the young and tell them, "Don't do this. Don't go down this path. It will lead only to suffering, misery, death and destruction." ...

The reality is that there are many complex answers. They include grievance, but not all grievances are legitimate. ... Then you have the question of Western culture being dominant. People just get angry and frustrated about it, so they feel their voices are silenced. ...

Then you have the desire for empowerment, which is an important motivation. As soon as they end up in these jihad theatres—if we can call them that—you see many of these people taking pictures and posing with the weapons. They feel that sense of pride and empowerment, because they feel that they are marginalised. They feel powerless wherever they come from, but once they are there, that inner desire for power is liberated. ...

Q208 Fabian Hamilton: Would it be fair to say that one of the antidotes to violent radicalisation might be education?

Aimen Dean: That is at the core of it—not only education, but critical thinking. We are not asking people to really look deep into the consequences of their actions ... If we tell people, "This is the nation state you live in, but if you try to bring down that nation state, the result will be that there will be no ATM outside to withdraw, no ambulance to come and pick you up, no school to educate you and your kids, and no police to come and help you if anything goes wrong," that is when we start to tell them, "Don't bring down the state structure, because what will replace it will be far worse."

Q209 Fabian Hamilton: Can I then ask how you think the UK can disrupt the appeal of jihadist terrorism? ...

Aimen Dean: ... always debate because that is how you insert the virus of doubt into the minds of those who would use the absolute certainty of their faith to carry out unspeakable atrocities. ...

Q210 Fabian Hamilton: Can you tell us a bit more about ... the types of people who join jihadist terror groups? ...

Aimen Dean: Within the jihadist context, there is one common denominator: seeking redemption. In Catholicism, you go to a priest, confess your sins, and that's it; you gain absolution. There is not that system within Islam. You have to repent directly to God, and you have no idea if your repentance is accepted.

At the same time, there has been some crisis in the state of preaching within Muslim societies over the past 50, 60, 70 years, because of the advent of Western culture and liberal values. Preaching in Islam used to be based on three pillars: love, hope and fear. You love the Lord, you hope for his reward and you fear his damnation.

A standard preaching would be to divide your preaching into three thirds. However, I think the emphasis on damnation and eternal punishment has pushed a significant number of young people to think, "That's it; I have no hope." The way I listen to preaching these days, people just keep telling their congregations—out of love, of course, out of the idea that they want to safeguard their congregations from whatever temptations—that if you drink, hell; if you smoke, hell; if you deal drugs, hell; if you join a gang, hell. But there is not the incentive that if you do not do any of those you go to heaven.

Some preachers—not all—have replaced hope with fear. That has created a generation of guilty people, who would say haram to everything. Who would say, "You shouldn't do that. You shouldn't greet people for Christmas. You shouldn't mix with people who are outside our faith circle." It starts with guilt and that guilt, unfortunately again, through the desire to do good, ends up with people doing bad.

Q211 Chair: ... A lot of people who have left terrorist groups talk about having that moment when they realise, for example, "Why do my leaders keep asking me to blow myself up, and why do they want me to have this great eternal hopeful future, but they don't want it for themselves?"

Was there a turning point for you where you thought, "I need to leave al-Qaeda."? Or was it that were just approached by an effective recruiter? It is one thing to leave an organisation and it is another to turn actively against it and work against it for the secret services. ...

Aimen Dean: Doubt—it all started with doubt. ... On top of that, there is the fact that you also have that fear of God, that you do not want to do the wrong thing. You become more and more inquisitive about the legitimacy of whatever you are asked to do.

So it was the East Africa bombings in 1998. ... I was shocked by the number of civilian casualties. There were 12 American diplomats killed, but there were more than 220 innocent people killed ...

Q212 Dan Carden (Labour): ... How successful are groups like al-Qaeda and Daesh with online radicalisation? ...

Aimen Dean: In the 1990s, recruitment used to be peer to peer because there were no digital means ...

In the past, you couldn't invade 100,000 living rooms, 100,000 smartphones, 100,000 bedrooms at night with your videos, your tweets, your posts, your secret Telegram postings—it wasn't possible. But the explosion, no pun intended, in the number of recruits took place as the means of communication became more prevalent, easy and widespread. That started to target more people who are tech-savvy, and people who are curious. Who are they? The young. ...

Q213 Dan Carden: What steps should the UK be taking to tackle this threat?

Aimen Dean: ... You have to destroy the credibility of the people who carry out the recruitment: "Why don't you go? You want me to go, but your kids are going to this

university or this college, or they are enjoying life in this public school. Why is it that you get to enjoy the fruits of this life, but you are more than happy to send other people to their slaughter?" ...

Q217 Aimen Dean: For the three key areas where people are vulnerable, you are talking about the online space, university campuses and prisons. ...

The problem with online is the fact that it all starts with several starting points; there isn't one starting point. Some people start from conspiracy theories ... Other people end up in the world of fantasies invented due to civil wars within Islam—actually dynastic wars within Islam—1,300 years ago, in order to look into prophecies, eschatology, about the end of time. They think, "These are the battles at the end of time. God ordained this fight and I need to join it. ...

Q218 Aimen Dean: ... Those who are supposed to enforce the laws, the regulations and the powers need to know what they are looking for in the first place. I think one of the reasons is just the lack of awareness, the lack of a full understanding and a holistic approach to what actually makes a jihadist, because there isn't one single journey. You have to imagine jihad as a river, and all the other factors are tributaries to it. ...

Q219 Aimen Dean: The reality is that most of what I would call the Islamist, ideology-driven groups ... Most of these groups were actually founded in universities ... especially in the '50s and '60s with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and jihadism, that was because of the pull and push between communism and capitalism, or socialism and the free market. As the Muslim world was being squeezed from both sides, the question was: why aren't we united? Everyone started to yearn and become nostalgic for an era that hardly existed. ...

Q220 Aimen Dean: ... The first cleric since the Prophet Muhammad to actually ascend into power in any Muslim community was Khomeini, and there was 1,400 years difference between the two. That tells you that Islam never actually gave ruling and governance to the clergy. It gave it to the ruling class ... Merchants.

Q221 Dan Carden: In your view, what is the most effective form of Government to counter the threat of radicalisation and terrorism in the Middle East ...

Aimen Dean: ... I always advise people ... not to refer to the Middle East as one homogeneous zone. There are two zones there—the royal zone and the non-royal zone. The royal zone is inherently stable; the non-royal zone is inherently unstable, and there is a reason for that.

The Middle East was the birthplace of monarchy from the beginning, with King Sargon of Akkad and Hammurabi and the Mesopotamian kingdoms, and it then spread throughout. ... the social contract between kings and their people is far more binding than with autocratic generals or dictatorial presidents of a republic. There is a difference; the king is looked at as a legitimate form of governance that has been around for thousands of years, while the other is just a usurper ...

Q222 Aimen Dean: ... The oath of allegiance in Islam given to kings is the same as the one given to a caliph, so there is that religious anointment ...

Q226 Brendan O'Hara (SNP): Could I ask about the potential impact of 7 October, and the conflict in Gaza, on the growth of radicalisation, and how concerned we should be about that? Is there evidence that al-Qaeda, or Daesh, or Iranian proxies, for example, have exploited the conflict? Have you seen a greater level of support and funding of those groups since 7 October? And where should we be looking for that potential growth, and those dangers?

Aimen Dean: ... We have a situation now where Gaza is the new Syria; this is the gravitational pull that is bringing out the worst in people, unfortunately—again, because of a lack of wisdom, lack of understanding, and lack of awareness.

When you talk about 7 October, yes Hamas did it, but it is my assessment that since 2014

Hamas ceased to be a national Palestinian liberation movement and became an Iranian tool. It wasn't doing anything on behalf of the average Palestinian; it was doing it on behalf of the ayatollahs of Iran. Many people are still blind to this fact. This blindness is a lack of awareness, lack of education, lack of wisdom. People are not confronting back with evidence-based facts, and therefore, when the narrative is hijacked by radicals who try to simplify this whole complex conflict, when in fact it is as complex as it could be, this is when radicalisation happens.

Unfortunately, since 7 October, we have seen a revival of ISIS in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and also a revival of al-Qaeda in Yemen. We start to see more funding going to al-Shabaab in Somalia. We start to see the Taliban also improving their funding mechanism, especially through trade in commodities. All of this highlights the fact that Gaza became a lucrative brand in itself—not only for the Sunni terrorist groups but also for the Iranian Shi'a threat network, such as Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and the militias in Iraq.

Q227 Brendan O'Hara: ... Should we be aware of anything that is going on domestically in increased radicalisation since 7 October?

Aimen Dean: I don't think there is anything that basically makes it domestic in places like Yemen and Iraq and Syria, because the war has been going on there for years and years. The conflict, and the dynamics of the conflict, has been going on there for a very long time. It is just the opportunity ... is the best way to exploit people's emotions, anger, frustration, and it is a perfect neon sign for recruitment.

Q228 Aimen Dean: ... in the protests around the globe, in recruitment efforts or in fundraising, Gaza plays an important part, and yet how many of those involved are actually originally Palestinians—from Gaza or even the West Bank, or from the diaspora? You will find that the majority are non-Palestinians, some of them non-Arabs—from the Indian subcontinent or from Sub-Saharan Africa. You see that, really, they are not galvanised by domestic nation state concerns; they are galvanised by this notion of pan-Islamic solidarity as a precursor to a pan-Islamic action to establish a caliphate again. The idea of the caliphate has started to take centre stage again. Look at what happened in Hamburg just a few days ago, when a group of protesters in their hundreds were carrying black flags and chanting slogans for the return of the caliphate in Hamburg, in Germany.

Q229 Neil Coyle (Labour): In some of the protests here, we have seen the emergence or re-emergence, if you like, of some terrorist paraphernalia, including Hamas paraphernalia, on the streets of London. Are the police trained sufficiently to identify and intervene when we see the symbols, flags, leaflets or literature? ... do you feel that Prevent is resourced enough to intervene to prevent people from going down a path of radicalisation?

Aimen Dean: Again, the domestic issues here are very complex because of the sacred laws when it comes to freedom of speech. The question is: how do you define the very thin line between free speech and incitement? ... It might be radical; it might not be to everyone's taste, but it is still legitimate speech in the minds of those who authored it. ... But let us say that, as Hamas is a proscribed organisation, if its literature were to be spread, that in itself would be an incitement and a crime. The question is whether the police take action. Generally speaking, my experience over the past 25 years, looking at how different Governments around the world deal with terrorism, is that the more you try to appease people to avoid confrontation, the more that invites confrontation. The more you have a moral backbone and show the bravery to confront things head on, not try to skirt around them, the more that generates that level of not just fear, but respect from the other side so that they step back and think about what they are doing.

Q230 Fabian Hamilton: ... How did the financing of terrorism evolve in the wake of restrictions imposed following 9/11? ...

Aimen Dean: ... terrorist groups are in two categories: state sponsored and non-state sponsored. Examples of the state sponsored are Hezbollah or the Houthis. They have a state sponsor, such as Iran. Then, of course, they have other means of funding, such as

criminal enterprises, weapon smuggling and narcotics. ...

If we go to the non-state sponsored—such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban, ISIS, al-Shabaab—there is a multitude of funding streams. You have donations coming from the diasporas or from ideologically like-minded people ... However, there are also the business networks. ... al-Qaeda in the 1990s and the precursor to ISIS, which was the ISI, or the Islamic State of Iraq, in the 2000s, built a network of businesses—farms, consumer goods places, cafés and restaurants, retail—in order to generate funds to keep laundering that cash and to make sure, basically, that they have a network of intelligence gathering through these shops and legitimate businesses but also, at the same time, to generate funds. ... you also have the Hawala system. ... The conflicts have now driven tens of millions of people out of their homes in Syria, in Libya, in Yemen, in Iraq, in Iran, in Pakistan, in Afghanistan so you end up with tens of millions of people fuelling this black economy, hiding among those big numbers. ...

Q231 Royston Smith (Conservative): Can I talk to you about involving terrorists in political settlements? You talked earlier about appeasement, a show of strength and confronting the ideology, or the terrorists. But there is an alternative that we are perhaps seeing in Yemen, where the Houthis may well be part of a political settlement. ...

Aimen Dean: A political settlement can be reached if the objective of the group in question revolves around power and material gains. If the group in question is not concerned about borders—with staying within the confines of their internationally accepted borders—we have a problem. Ideologically-driven groups—such as Hamas, the Houthis, and others—have the idea that these borders are artificial and the construct of a colonial era that needs to be deleted ...

Article 5 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran stipulates who the leader of the country is. You might think that the leader of the country is Ayatollah Khamenei—the supreme leader. But he is just the deputy. The real leader is someone who has been missing for 1,200 years. You have a five-year-old child who disappeared 1,200 years ago, and it just so happens that this child is, by article 5 of the Iranian constitution, the leader of the state. ...

The Mahdi—the idea that there is this messiah figure coming—is driving Hezbollah, the Houthis and the Shi'a militias. It drove al-Qaeda before. It drove ISIS before. Everyone has the idea that they are paving the way for a saviour. ...

Q232 Aimen Dean: ... The idea of using al-Qaeda and other Sunni radical groups, including Hamas, is something that Iran has perfected over the past two and a half decades. ...

That is one of the reasons why I always argued that Iran cannot be trusted to be a nuclear power: because of the presence and founding, establishing, nurturing, training and funding of so many proxies. You never know if they are going to build a device and modify it for land detonation then hand it over to one of these terrorist groups, especially if it is a Sunni one, and say, “Go and do with it whatever you want.” At the end of the day, it is deniable: “It is not my material. It is not my bomb.” ...

Q237 Chair: ... I don't think that you can deradicalise people. I think that the psychological drivers remain there; you can only redirect them or refocus them to a different area of obsession and focus. Given that we spend a lot of time being told that we should take back all of these people to the UK and allow anyone under 18 to live in society freely, where do you think that we sit on that in terms of being able to deradicalise people?

Finally ... what is the biggest change that you would make to either UK foreign policy or our approach towards counter-terrorism that you think would meaningfully make us safer from the risk from terrorism?

Aimen Dean: In terms of deradicalisation, I never really agreed with it, because I agree with the term rehabilitation. ... I find “countering violent extremism” and “deradicalisation” unhelpful, because it carries a stigma. ... The question is therefore, how

do we do rehabilitation? It is not about deradicalisation; it is about taking away the violence and the driver towards violence from the person, in order for them to function normally or semi-normally within a society. That is the best you can hope for. ...

As for UK foreign policy, it is my view ... that the UK should conduct its foreign policy according to the interests of the UK and its people. It should not be dictated by any loud voices from any minority. ... This is how the Government should behave with any dissenting voices: "Look, I'm the elected Government. I decide what foreign policy is the best for the UK and its population. You can disagree—no problem. You can take a megaphone and shout all you want, but if you step out of line and use violence to assert your point, things will be different." ...

Q244 Chair: ... We had a former head of MI6 in here saying that we don't seem to have learned the lesson that you cannot bring a military solution to a political problem. ...

Professor Alexander Evans (School of Public Policy, LSE): ... You can't always achieve a political settlement, and it has to be a political settlement that respects the red lines that you have as a nation and as a like-minded democratic community. But that doesn't absent the need for force or coercion. The negotiation specialists talk about the ZOPA. Of course, academics, just like bureaucrats, love acronyms, but ZOPA is the zone of possible agreement. If you are looking for a ZOPA in an international conflict or in a national conflict, you have to be confident that there actually is a common terrain that would be at least minimally acceptable to all parties. The challenge often with terrorist groups is that there is not an acceptable ZOPA to reach.

Q248 Chair: ... I want to ask about our approach to areas where we see vast amounts of terrorism within a country. Are we doing enough on the governance, capacity-building and political settlement side, or is it that we create a space for political settlements where political teams run around doing a lot of very hard work, but if we cannot get a ZOPA, as you call it, and there is no real room for agreement, we essentially let CT take over and drop the political settlement and governance work to one side? ...

Professor Evans: ... If we think about the history of the UK in international counter-terrorism, the Foreign Office really developed a capability in the 1960s and 1970s. It was still relatively niche as late as the mid-1990s, and it was only really after 9/11 that it acquired the cadence and resourcing and cross-Government footprint that it has today. ... In the 1960s and 1970s, it was about dealing with aircraft hijackings in particular, so it was about joint work internationally through the International Civil Aviation Organisation, joining up with airlines and joining up internationally, because you were talking about point-to-point airport security ... After 9/11, it was about the ability to try to fuse development, diplomacy, justice and the security and intelligence services along with political work by diplomats. ...

Data sharing between Government agencies is very difficult. Institutional cultures and cultures of accountability and authority inhibit the data sharing and co-ordination in Government that is so crucial at home as well as overseas. ...

Q252 Fabian Hamilton: Can I just ask you how you think the increasing tendency for state-sponsored terrorism undermines the multilateral approach to curbing terrorism worldwide? ...

Professor Evans: ... the risk appetite is growing among certain states. That growing risk appetite then has a secondary effect on other states as well. ... Does it fundamentally destroy the fabric of international co-operation, co-ordination, the standards, sanctions on counter-terrorism: no. Does it undermine, though, the credibility of those regimes? Yes it does. ...

[Royston Smith took the Chair]

Q258 Chair: What reform could we or should we see at the UN Security Council to help to protect stability in the Middle East? In your assessment, which country or countries should

be given a permanent seat on the Security Council?

Professor Evans: ... There are, of course, a range of credible candidates. ... The balance between the efficacy of having a small council that can reach decisions speedily, along with questions of how and where the use of veto is exercised, and representation across the UN system is a delicate one.

Self-evidently, the UN Security Council needs reform. How that reform should be manifested and who should end up on the council is a trickier question, and that is where so much of the international debate has lain of late. It is important to note—this is perhaps pulling back to the multipolar operating environment we are in now—that it is sometimes tempting, if you are sitting in the Security Council, to think that we live in a world of 15, where five may be slightly more equal than the other 10. We do not; we live in a world of 193. Many of the frameworks that would shape counter-terrorism—and indeed much other international policy, such as the regulation of, or international agreements or standards around, technology—are made among 193 countries, not 15. One of the challenges for UK influence and engagement internationally is that the relationship with the 193 is important, not just the membership of 15.

Q259 Chair: Some might argue that you wouldn't have 193, but you might have more regional representation. ... some people think that Saudi Arabia, as the region's leading light, if you like, might be one of the countries that would be considered for Security Council membership. ...

Professor Evans: ... I would pull back and say that there is a legitimate debate on whether you can really have a continent without recognition or a significant grouping within the international system without representation. Of course, there is representation through elected members—the E10 of the Security Council—but that is materially different to being a permanent member of the Security Council.

On counter-terrorism, it is important to recognise that there is a balance between Security Council mechanisms and General Assembly mechanisms. The General Assembly activity on counter-terrorism is really important if we are thinking about Prevent, deradicalisation, some of the capacity-building issues internationally, the funding mechanisms for capacity building and support, and the work of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism.

The Security Council plays a crucially important role in the sanctions regime ...

Q260 Professor Evans: ... The UN can talk to the Sudanese, the Russians, the Chinese and the Iranians, as well as to the Israelis, the Americans, ourselves and the French. The ability to talk to everybody is a particular, and I would argue largely unique, capability of the UN, and particularly of these UN Security Council expert groups. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14796/html/>

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Other Relevant Information

Tel Aviv University and Anti-Defamation League

Tel Aviv University and the Anti-Defamation League Publish the Annual Report on Antisemitism Worldwide for 2023

The Annual Antisemitism Worldwide Report, published by Tel Aviv University (TAU) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), reveals that 2023 saw an increase of dozens of percentage points in the number of antisemitic incidents in Western countries in comparison to 2022. A particularly steep increase was recorded following the October 7

attacks, but the first nine months of 2023, before the war started, also witnessed a relative increase in the number of incidents in most countries with large Jewish minorities, including the United States, France, the UK, Australia, Italy, Brazil, and Mexico. ...

- In France, the number of incidents increased from 436 in 2022 to 1,676 in 2023 (the number of physical assaults increased from 43 to 85);
- Incidents in the UK rose from 1,662 to 4,103 (physical assaults from 136 to 266);
- In Argentina, incidents increased from 427 to 598;
- In Germany, incidents rose from 2,639 to 3,614;
- In Brazil, total incidents increased from 432 to 1,774;
- In South Africa total incidents went from 68 to 207;
- In Mexico, incidents rose from 21 to 78;
- In the Netherlands, incidents increased from 69 to 154;
- In Italy, the data increased from 241 to 454;
- In Austria, the total incidents rose from 719 to 1,147.
- Australia recorded 622 antisemitic incidents in October and November 2023, in comparison to 79 during the same period in 2022. ...

According to Prof. Uriya Shavit, Head of "The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry" and the "Irwin Cotler Institute," "... if current trends continue, the curtain will descend on the ability to lead Jewish lives in the West – to wear a Star of David, attend synagogues and community centers, send kids to Jewish schools, frequent a Jewish club on campus, or speak Hebrew." ...

Prof. Shavit added: "The reality is that Israel, as a state, is limited in what it can do for Jewish communities. But even the little that can be done is not done. Israel does not have a meaningful strategic plan for combatting antisemitism that is based on the needs of Jewish communities. ...

According to Prof. Shavit, "one of the biggest challenges of our time is how to mobilize support for the fight against antisemitism without making it the definer of Jewish identity".

ADL's CEO and National Director, Jonathan Greenblatt, said: "... This year's report is incredibly alarming, with documented unprecedented levels of antisemitism, including in the US, where 2023 saw the highest number of antisemitic incidents in the US ever recorded by ADL. ...

Former Canadian Justice Minister and Attorney General Irwin Cotler ... warns that "the explosion of antisemitism is a threat not only to Jews, but is toxic to our democracies, an assault on our common humanity, and a standing threat to human security – in a word, the bloodied canary in the mineshaft of global evil.

Jews alone cannot combat it, let alone defeat it. What is required is a constituency of conscience – a whole of government, whole of society commitment and action to fight this oldest and most lethal of hatreds."...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/tel-aviv-university-and-anti-defamation-league-publish-annual-report>

Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2023

https://cst.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/AntisemitismWorldwide_2023_Final.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>

House of Commons Library Briefing

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10022/CBP-10022.pdf>

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/55479/documents/4831>

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 3 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