



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Social Media: Safety

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [25823] To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will take steps under the powers available to her as set out in Schedule 11(1)(b) of the Online Safety Act to bring forward legislative proposals setting category 1 threshold conditions in relation to small forums that share (a) antisemitic hatred and (b) suicide methods.

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [25823] To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if she will make it her policy to regulate small forums that share (a) antisemitic hatred and (b) instructional content on methods of suicide to the fullest extent possible under the powers available to her in the Online Safety Act 2023; and what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies on that matter of Ofcom's advice of 29 February 2024 on the use of powers under that Act.

Saqib Bhatti: The Secretary of State is considering in detail the advice that Ofcom has provided. The Secretary of State will make regulations as soon as reasonably practicable, in line with Schedule 11 of the Act.

More broadly, all user-to-user services in scope of the Online Safety Act – including online forums of any size – will be required to comply with the illegal safety duties

and take steps to remove illegal content. The strongest protections in the Act are for children and where these services are likely to be accessed by children, they must also protect children from a wider range of harmful content. Targeted duties on search services, to minimise illegal search results, will also reduce traffic to websites, including online forums, that host illegal material.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25823>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25824>

Schedule 11 of the Online Safety Act, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/schedule/11/enacted>

Department of Health and Social Care

An overview of the death certification reforms

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-death-certification-process/an-overview-of-the-death-certification-reforms>

Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Hate Crimes: Successful Prosecutions

Miles Briggs (Conservative) [S6W-27369] To ask the Scottish Government what proportion of alleged hate crimes reported since the commencement of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 have been successfully prosecuted.

Dorothy Bain: Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) uses a live, operational database to manage the processing of reports submitted to Procurators Fiscal by the police and other reporting agencies throughout Scotland. It is designed to meet business needs in the processing of criminal cases, rather than for statistical purposes and the information within it is structured accordingly. Information provided is at date of extract and may therefore be subject to change as data and systems are updated for operational reasons.

From 1 April to 14 May 2024, 123 hate crime charges and 422 charges with one or more hate crime aggravations have been reported to COPFS. The combined total number of charges is 545.

As at 14 May 2024, 343 charges have been marked for court proceedings and a further 60 charges have been marked as “not separately actioned”. Where a charge is marked as “not separately actioned”, no action was taken against the charge, but action (prosecution in court) was taken against the accused and some of the libel in the charge may have been incorporated into a charge that was actioned.

COPFS is not the holder of conviction data but, according to our case management system, 26 charges have so far resolved after court proceedings, a conviction is recorded in 17 of these charges.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-27369>

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Holocaust

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [775] Promoter's Response to the First Special Report of the Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee – That this House notes the Promoter's Response to the Select Committee's First Special Report of Session 2023-24, CP 1086; regrets that the promoter has failed to understand the justified requests for a detailed comparison of the present unsatisfactory scheme with the alternatives studied by the Government's consultants; further regrets the continuing lack of updated costings for capital and recurrent costs; disagrees with the suggestion that planning permission and all other necessary consents were obtained in the usual way; regrets there is no known plan to spend more available resources on education rather than on construction; further regrets that known and growing security restrictions are not being adequately addressed; and believes the promoter is not meeting its obligation to achieve an appropriate memorial at a justified cost in a suitable location, associated with opportunities to learn and to understand the Holocaust and to reduce the likelihood of a repeat of the atrocities of the Holocaust.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/62279>

The Select Committee report referred to above can be read at

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

The Promoter's (Government's) response to the report can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66475d69f34f9b5a56adca0b/Holocaust_Memorial_Bill_Select_Committee_Response_WEB.pdf

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Review into Alderney camps determines truth around death toll during Nazi occupation

... the United Kingdom's Post Holocaust Issues Envoy, Lord Eric Pickles, announced the findings of the review of the evidence into the number of prisoners who died in the Channel Island of Alderney during the Nazi occupation.

The review analyses the pre-existing evidence around the number of people who died in Alderney during the Nazi occupation, aiming to dispel conspiracy theories and provide the most accurate figure possible of those who lost their lives on the island.

The review, [commissioned by Lord Pickles](#), draws on the knowledge and experience of a team of eleven independent and internationally recognised experts.

The extensive research conducted by the panel to determine the truth around the numbers of deaths on Alderney is not just crucial for bringing justice for those who died, but in ensuring that this period of history, and the Holocaust, is remembered fully and accurately.

Lord (Eric) Pickles, UK Special Envoy on Post Holocaust Issues said: ... Numbers do matter. It is as much of a Holocaust distortion to exaggerate the number of deaths as it is to underplay the numbers. Exaggeration plays into the hands of Holocaust deniers and undermines the 6 million dead. The truth can never harm us.

While today Alderney is a peaceful island in the English Channel, famous for its beauty, tranquillity, and the welcome of its residents, the story was vastly different between 1941 to 1945 when the island was under Nazi occupation.

During this time, crimes were committed against forced and slave labourers, transported from countries across Europe and brought to Alderney to construct fortifications as part of the German war effort.

Housed in camps that shared many of the traits of those in mainland Europe, these labourers were subject to atrocious living and working conditions, and, in some cases, executions.

The team's calculation of the minimum number of prisoners or labourers sent to Alderney throughout the German occupation stands between 7,608 and 7,812 people.

Death figures calculated after Alderney was liberated by the British originally suggested that 389 people died as a result of this ill-treatment.

Having initiated a review of the mortality rate, the Alderney Expert Review Panel is confident that the number of deaths in Alderney is unlikely to have exceeded 1,134 people, with a more likely range of deaths being between 641 and 1,027.

The review panel has concluded that there is no evidence that many thousands of victims died, and that claims Alderney constituted a 'mini-Auschwitz' are unsubstantiated.

Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE said: The findings of the Alderney Review are a significant and welcome development. Having an authoritative account of this harrowing element of the island's history is vital. It enables us to accurately remember the individuals who so tragically suffered and died on British soil. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-into-alderney-camps-determines-truth-around-death-toll-during-nazi-occupation>

The Lord Pickles Alderney Expert Review

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/664cc5d2bd01f5ed32793fc4/The_Lord_Pickles-Alderney_expert_review.pdf

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon I welcome the publication today of the Alderney Review's findings on the number of prisoners who died on Alderney during the Nazi occupation.

<https://x.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1793282548778373575>

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon My thanks to Lord @EricPickles and his review panel for their work to ensure the truth of the Holocaust is remembered fully & accurately.

<https://x.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1793282550862889209>

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Israel

See also Commons written answers 25831 "Jordan: Hezbollah" and 26291 "Turkey: Politics and Government" that are included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Written Answers

Visas: Palestinians

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [26792] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will implement a visa scheme to enable Palestinian children to receive critical medical treatment in the UK.

Tom Pursglove: The UK is exploring how best to support the medical needs of those in Gaza, including what options can be provided in the region.

It is ultimately at the discretion of the Israeli and Egyptian authorities who can cross

the border.

The Home Office is not currently considering establishing a bespoke visa scheme for Palestinian children to receive critical medical treatment in the UK. There are provisions that allow a person to come to the UK for private medical treatment under Appendix V of the Immigration Rules. If the rules are not met, careful consideration will be given on whether a grant of leave outside of the rules would be appropriate. Should applications be submitted from Palestinian children, who have secured permission from the Israeli and Egyptian authorities to exit Gaza, requiring specialist medical treatment they will be treated with the utmost seriousness. If that leads to the identification of specific cases in which a person would be better off making the long journey to the UK to undertake treatment, we will not rule out bringing them to British hospitals, as we have done in the past.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-16/26792>

Appendix V of the Immigration Rules, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor>

Refugees: Gaza

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [26252] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will take steps to support Palestinian families seeking reunification with relatives from Gaza.

Tom Pursglove: There are no plans to introduce bespoke arrangements for people arriving from the region. Those wishing to come to the UK who currently have no visa can apply under one of the existing visa routes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26252>

Fuels: Israel

Richard Thomson (SNP) [24834] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what information her Department holds on the (a) types of fuel and (b) amount of jet fuel that has been exported to Israel for military purposes since 7 October 2023.

Alan Mak: DBT publishes data on export licences for controlled goods on a quarterly basis, including data on end user destination, value, type (e.g. military, other) and a summary of the items covered by these licences.

However, DBT has no record of any current export licences for Israel for aircraft fuels formulated for military purposes.

There are no UK exports of any jet fuel to Israel from October 2023 to March 2024 (the latest data available) according to HMRC's Overseas Trade in Goods Statistics.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-03/24834>

The DBT data referred to above can be read at

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

The HMRC data referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-overseas-trade-in-goods-statistics-march-2023>

Arms Trade: Israel

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [25912] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what recent assessment she has made of the impact of Government legal advice on the sales of arms to Israel on export licensing decisions.

Alan Mak: We are monitoring the situation in Israel and Gaza very closely. All licences are kept under careful and continual review and we are able to amend, suspend, refuse or revoke licences as circumstances require. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade receives legal advice as appropriate

We do not comment on legal advice in accordance with longstanding convention.

Iran: Israel

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [25830] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of Iran firing cruise missiles at Israel.

Andrew Mitchell: We have condemned in the strongest terms Iran's direct attack against Israel on 13 April which was a dangerous escalation.

The UK will continue to stand up for Israel's security and the security of all our regional partners. Alongside our allies, we are working to prevent further escalation. On 18 April and 25 April the UK announced sanctions to limit Iran's military capabilities. The UK also announced travel bans and asset freezes against those involved in drone production. The designations were made under the new Iran sanctions regime, which came into force in December 2023 and enables the UK to target Iran's hostile behaviour.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25830>

The announcements referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-uk-and-us-sanction-leading-iranian-military-figures-and-entities-following-the-attack-on-israel>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-targets-irans-ability-to-launch-drones-through-new-round-of-sanctions>

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Mark Logan (Conservative) [25721] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what the Government's policy is on whether Palestine should be granted full United Nations membership.

Andrew Mitchell: As the Prime Minister made clear, the UK supports a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people.

We agree that the people of the West Bank and Gaza must be given the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future. And it needs to be irreversible.

We believe that recognition of Palestinian statehood should not come at the start of a new process, but it does not have to be at the very end of the process.

We must start with fixing the immediate crisis in Gaza. Gaza is Occupied Palestinian Territory and must be part of a future Palestinian state. However, Hamas is still in control of parts of Gaza and Israeli hostages remain in captivity - this shows that we are still at the start of the process.

Ensuring Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza and removing Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel are essential and unavoidable steps on the road to lasting peace; as is working together to support the new Palestinian government as it takes much-needed steps on reform and resumes governance in Gaza as well as the West Bank.

We abstained on the vote at the UN Security Council because we must keep our focus on securing an immediate pause in order to get aid in and hostages out; then making progress towards a sustainable ceasefire without a return to destruction, fighting and loss of life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-10/25721>

The Explanation of Vote at the UN 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>

The following two questions both received the same answer

UNRWA: Finance

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [26545] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has had discussions with other donors of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the UK's funding to that organisation.

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [26546] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent discussions the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has had with representatives of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the UK's funding to UNRWA.

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

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

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26545>
and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26546>

Catherine Colonna's report, referred to above, can be read at

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

UNRWA's response referred to above can be read at

<https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-preliminary-response-final-report-independent-review-mechanisms-and>

Gaza: Health Services

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [25910] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of the (a) capacity of (i) hospitals and (ii) primary health care centres and (b) availability of (A) medicine and (B) basic medical supplies in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Healthcare facilities and the provision of healthcare services have been severely affected by the conflict in Gaza. The UK is doing all we can to get more aid in by land, air and sea. This includes a field hospital, provided by UK Aid funding to UK-Med, that is up and running in Gaza and has already treated thousands of patients.

The Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister have underlined the need for Israel to increase the amount of aid getting into Gaza, deconflict with the UN and aid agencies, protect civilians and repair vital infrastructure like hospitals and water networks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25910>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op) [26462] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will hold discussions with his Israeli counterpart on taking steps (a) following recent and (b) to help prevent future attacks on aid convoys by Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

Andrew Mitchell: Attacks by extremists on aid convoys en route to Gaza are appalling. The Foreign Secretary raised his concerns with Israeli Minister Gantz on 16 May.

On 3 May, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions on extremist groups

and individuals for inciting and perpetrating settler violence in the West Bank
<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26462>

The announcement referred to above can be read at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-extremist-groups-and-individuals-for-settler-violence-in-the-west-bank>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Matthew Pennycook (Labour) [25301] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of the Israeli Defence Forces taking control of the Rafah border crossing on the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We have been clear that entry points for humanitarian aid, including Rafah and Kerem Shalom, must be reopened quickly to allow aid in. Israel must facilitate immediate uninterrupted humanitarian access in the south, including the entry of fuel, and ensure protection of civilians and safe passage for those who wish to leave Rafah.

We are clear that we would not support a major operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan so, in these circumstances, we would not support a major operation in Rafah.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-08/25301>

Gaza: Borders

Emma Hardy (Labour) [25316] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will take diplomatic steps to ensure the reopening of the (a) Rafah and (b) Kerem Shalom crossings.

Andrew Mitchell: We have been clear that entry points for humanitarian aid, including Rafah and Kerem Shalom, must be reopened quickly to allow aid in. Israel must facilitate immediate uninterrupted humanitarian access in the south, including the entry of fuel, and ensure protection of civilians and safe passage for those who wish to leave Rafah. The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has pressed these points with the Israeli Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-08/25316>

Gaza: Israel

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [25911] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has taken diplomatic steps to help prevent Israel's invasion of Rafah.

Andrew Mitchell: We are clear that we would not support a major operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan so, in these circumstances, we would not support a major operation in Rafah.

The Foreign Secretary has pressed these points with Israeli counterparts.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25911>

Israel: Palestinians

Flick Drummond (Conservative) [25867] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the forced eviction of over 300 Palestinians from the village of Wadi al Khalil by Israeli police on 8 May 2024.

Andrew Mitchell: Our opposition to the evictions from, and demolition of, Palestinian property is long-standing. The practice causes unnecessary suffering and is harmful to efforts to promote peace. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25867>

Jerusalem: Religious Freedom

Andrew Selous (Conservative) [25805] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether his Department plans to take steps to help preserve religious freedom in Jerusalem for minority Christians.

Andrew Mitchell: We are encouraging the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and our Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise issues of religious freedom with both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25805>

Jerusalem: Ethnic Groups

Andrew Selous (Conservative) [25806] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of reports of (a) violence and (b) land repossession against Armenian Christians in Jerusalem; and whether his Department plans to take steps to help preserve the Armenian community presence in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK is monitoring the situation and is clear on the need to avoid any further rise in tensions. British Consulate General staff in Jerusalem met members of the community earlier this year, discussed the current situation, and visited relevant sites in the Old City of Jerusalem.

The UK is a strong supporter of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and an advocate for the integrity of culturally important areas to be respected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25806>

Israel and Occupied Territories: Christianity

Andrew Bridgen (Independent) [25231] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps the Government is taking to help support persecuted Christians in (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK is committed to defending Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) for all and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. The UK condemns all attacks on the right to freedom of religion or belief.

We encourage the Israeli Government to do all it can to uphold the values of equality for all enshrined in its laws. Our Embassy in Tel Aviv and Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise religious freedom with both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-08/25231>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Israel and Gaza

col 944 **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green):** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs what assessment he has made of Israel's compliance with the summary order regarding Gaza issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January, and what assessment he has made of the implications for the United Kingdom's obligations, particularly with regard to arms exports.

col 945 **The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton):** We respect the ICJ's role and independence; it is up to the court to monitor Israel's compliance. We have noted our concerns previously about this case, which we do not think is helpful in the goal of achieving a sustainable ceasefire. While there has been some progress in some areas of humanitarian relief, Israel must do more to make good its promises, and I

am pressing them on this, directly.

I regularly review advice about the situation in Gaza. Our position on export licences remains unchanged but, of course, we keep this under review.

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle: ... The ICC prosecutor has made applications for five arrest warrants, alleging war crimes and crimes against humanity by senior Hamas leaders, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Israel's Minister of Defense. The prosecutor was advised to do so unanimously by an independent panel of experts—our own noble Baroness, Lady Kennedy of the Shaws, among them—which has set out why it thinks there are reasonable grounds to believe that Mr Netanyahu and Mr Gallant have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Surely it now obvious that the UK should immediately at least suspend arms exports licences to Israel, given the clear risk that continuing them would put the UK in breach of international law. Surely the Minister will confirm here that the UK accepts the jurisdiction of the court in this case, under the Rome statute that the UK helped to write and, of course, agreed to.

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: ... the last time I was asked to make a political declaration outside our normal process of reviewing arms export licences, and to simply say that we would not sell any more arms to Israel, just a few days later Iran attacked Israel with a hail of over 140 cruise missiles. That position of acting outside our normal processes would have been completely wrong.

Let me answer very directly on the ICC's announcement yesterday. I do not believe for one moment that seeking these warrants will help get the hostages out, help get aid in, or help deliver a sustainable ceasefire. As we have said from the outset, because Israel is not a signatory to the Rome statute, and because Palestine is not yet recognised as a state, we do not think that the court has jurisdiction in this area. I would go beyond that and say that, frankly, this is mistaken in terms of position, timing and effect. To draw a moral equivalence between the Hamas leadership and the democratically elected leader of Israel is just plain wrong. It is not just Britain saying that; countries all over Europe and the world are saying that.

On timing, I point out to your Lordships' House that the ICC was about to embark on a visit to Israel, which some of us had helped to arrange, and at the last minute decided to cancel that visit and simply go ahead with its announcement. It is not normally for the ICC to think about the effect, but as it clearly thought about the timing, maybe it should also think about the effect. As I have said, it will not help get the hostages out, and it probably makes change in Israel less likely.

col 946 **Lord Robathan (Conservative):** ... Does [the Minister] also agree that if we and the rest of the West were to suspend arms sales, it would allow Hamas to regroup and return to the destructive and ghastly behaviour we witnessed on 7 October?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: ... Britain and America are obviously in completely different situations in terms of arms exports to Israel. Our exports are less than 1% of the total, so not a meaningful amount, whereas the United States is a far bigger provider. As I said, I think acting outside our proper processes and guidelines ... would not be the right thing to, for the reasons I have given.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): Does the Foreign Secretary recall that in the 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas, during which there were just over 2,000 Palestinian casualties, he agreed with us on these Benches? As Prime Minister, he decided to pause military equipment licences to Israel on the basis of a disproportionate response by the Israeli military. ... Do we take it now that his view is that the current Israeli military response is proportionate?

Will the Foreign Secretary reassure me that, notwithstanding any of his opinions about the ICC, we will honour every obligation that the United Kingdom has signed up to in the Rome statute? ...

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: There is a bit of a difference between 2014

and now. ...

I will tell you why. Today is day 227 of the hostages still being in captivity, including British citizens. All of this relates to what happened on 7 October. There was no “7 October” in 2014, so we are in a different situation. Of course we respect the independence of the ICC, but just as we respect its independence, it should respect the independence of politicians in not suddenly losing their voice and all their opinions about these things. ...

col 947 Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): I welcome the fact that the noble Lord is supporting the independence of the ICC, which is vital, but I hope he can truly find his voice. The UK supported UN Security Council Resolution 2417, which states that “unlawful denial of humanitarian access” and the act of “wilfully impeding relief supply” should be condemned. The noble Lord said on the BBC that “Israel has not had a clean bill of health” on allowing humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. Does he accept that Israel is in breach of that resolution, and if he does, does he not think that is a breach of international humanitarian law?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: The noble Lord is right: I absolutely did say, and I repeat, that we have far from given Israel a clean bill of health on this issue. Not enough has been done to get aid in. We have had some recent promises, which are encouraging, about 500 trucks a day, about the opening of Ashdod port, and about the new pier adjacent to the beach in Gaza. Some of those promises are being fulfilled: Ashdod is open, the pier is working, and aid is being delivered, including British aid. But some of the promises are not being kept, and no one has been tougher on the Israelis than me in direct call after call and message after message about having to meet their obligations.

We have not given them a clean bill of health, but there is a world of difference between that and issuing arrest warrants at the same time as you are doing so for Hamas, and drawing this moral equivalence. It is not just the UK that takes this view. The Germans have said that simultaneous applications for arrest warrants gives the false impression of an equation. The Americans have called it outrageous. The Italians have called it totally unacceptable. The Austrians have said: “The fact however that the leader of the terrorist organisation Hamas whose declared goal is the extinction of the State of Israel is being mentioned at the same time as the democratically elected representatives of that very State is non comprehensible”. The Czechs have said that it is appalling and completely unacceptable. I do not want to get too political in your Lordships’ House, but the odd man out, in many ways, is the party opposite, which seems to be saying that it supports the ICC in every way. ...

Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): While fully supporting Israel’s right to defend itself and fully supporting its desire to degrade Hamas’ military capacity, would the Foreign Secretary not agree that there is a legitimate worry about the use from the very beginning of the campaign of these 2,000-pound bombs, which, in a very densely populated area, are so difficult to use in a way that is both discriminate and proportionate?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: I agree that, while Israel has the right to defend itself, to try to deal with Hamas and to prevent 7 October happening again, it is important, as we have said throughout, that Israel complies with international humanitarian law as it does so.

col 948 Lord Swire (Conservative): Does my noble friend the Foreign Secretary share my concern that the continuing withholding of the now \$430 million under the Israel-Norway Accord, which is largely from Palestinian tax revenues, fatally undermines the authority of the Palestinian National Authority? ...

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: My noble friend is absolutely right. One of the most important things we can do in trying to bring this conflict to a conclusion is to work on the political measures that are going to be necessary to deal with these

problems. One of them is to strengthen the Palestinian Authority, which needs the money that Israel is holding back from it. We have pressed the Israelis about that again and again. I would still say to the Israelis that you cannot fight something with nothing. You may not think the Palestinian Authority is ideal; you may think that it fails in many respects; but you need to find a partner that is not Hamas that you can work with in Gaza on the West Bank, and that partner should be the new technocratic government run by the Palestinian Authority.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-21/debates/1EB77E7B-6303-4CF2-AE50-60750E2DD939/IsraelAndGaza>

The International Court of Justice 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>

The International Criminal Court statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state>

The report of the panel of experts to the International Criminal Court, referred to above by Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle, can be read at

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/240520-panel-report-eng.pdf>

UNSCR 2417, referred to above by Lord Collins of Highbury, can be read at

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2417\(2018\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2417(2018))

Conflict-induced Food Insecurity

col 956 Lord Browne of Ladyton (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs what diplomatic steps he is taking to address conflict-induced food insecurity, and to hold accountable those violating international humanitarian law through the deliberate use of hunger as a weapon of war.

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton): We use all our levers to address the issue of hunger during conflict. We use our diplomatic efforts, including in countries such as Sudan and in Gaza, where we push for humanitarian access. We use our funding and expertise as a development superpower, with £365 million of bilateral overseas aid spent on food security-related sectors. We also work through multilateral organisations, including at the United Nations ...

Lord Browne of Ladyton: My Lords, most conflict-related starvation occurs in internal and not international conflicts—most recently in South Sudan and Gaza. On 15 April, warning of famine in Sudan, the Foreign Secretary wrote that anyone “supporting those responsible ... must be held to account”.

What mechanism of accountability was he referring to? Given the ICC prosecutor’s action in seeking warrants, partly on the grounds of causing starvation as a weapon of war, that question is pertinent. In 2019, Article 8 of the Rome statute was unanimously amended to include deliberate starvation as a war crime, even in internal conflicts. Why, given the increasing prevalence of such acts and the UK’s support for the amendment five years ago, have we not yet ratified it?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: ... we supported the Article 8 amendment but have not yet put it in place. It is still under discussion ...

col 957 Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, the ICC chief prosecutor has said that there are reasonable grounds to accuse the Prime Minister and Defense Minister of Israel of a potential war crime, as we have heard. That war crime is the: “Starvation of civilians as a method of warfare”.

I note that the noble Lord said that he will respect the ICC process. Does he agree that 90 trucks via the sea bridge hardly matches up to the 4,500 trucks prevented from entering

via Rafah? Does he agree that, as a first step, funding must be restored to UNRWA, on which the aid agencies heavily depend for logistics and delivery capacity?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: ... On the entry of aid into Gaza, it is absolutely right that Israel has not met some of its promises, like the 500 trucks a day, but there are other areas, like having this new pier on the beach in Gaza, from which aid, including British aid, has been distributed. That is a step forward, as is opening Ashdod port, where flour for bakeries has been delivered. Those do not look to me like acts of a nation embarked on genocide and war crimes, but of course we must keep up the pressure elsewhere.

I totally understand and respect the fact that UNRWA is vital for the onward distribution of aid—I discussed this with the head of the World Food Programme just last week—but we have to be cognisant that reports that UNRWA staff were involved in 7 October need to be properly investigated and properly dealt with. Two reports have been commissioned, but we have had only one. I want to see that second report and I want really strong undertakings from UNRWA so that we know our money is going to the right cause.

col 958 **Baroness Blackstone (Labour):** My Lords, does the Foreign Secretary agree that the other countries that initially blocked funding for UNRWA have now restored it, with the exception of the United States? Why will the UK not restore funding as well, given the urgency to get UNRWA working again and delivering the aid so desperately needed by starving members of the Gazan population?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: Our past pledges to UNRWA already take us up to something like the end of May, so it is not short of money on our account and has had additional funding from other countries. I want us to be meticulous on behalf of our taxpayers and all those—including myself—who are concerned about the fact that UNRWA staff took part on 7 October. We have seen the Colonna report, but we have not seen the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services report. I want to see that, and I want Philippe Lazzarini, who runs UNRWA, to make very clear statements about how that organisation will be run in future so that we can have confidence that our funding will not just deliver aid but help to deliver an organisation that is truly impartial.

col 959 **Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, the noble Lord talked about food entering Gaza. Month after month from that Dispatch Box, he has said that Israel must do more. We have seen that it has not done more. He referred to the temporary port that has been built and there have been droppings by sea. We have seen that they are not fit for purpose; people have been killed trying to access food dropped from the air. The Rafah crossing, which is vital for the majority of aid to get through, has now been closed for 17 days. There are thousands of trucks just kilometres away waiting to deliver food. What pressure is he putting on and what diplomatic efforts are taking place to ensure that some of these crossings happen, so that people do not starve to death waiting for food that is on the other side of the crossing?

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton: I say two things to the noble Baroness. First, the Rafah crossing closed when the Israelis took over the Gazan side of it. There is a dispute now between the Egyptians, who have closed it on the other side, and the Israelis on the Gazan side. I do not want to apportion blame; all I know is that they are talking to each other and that the Americans are working extremely hard to bring them together to get a solution. We need Rafah open.

On the second point, I take issue with the noble Baroness. Yes, I am the first to say that Israel has not done as much as is needed, but it is not true that it has never responded to pressure. We asked it to open Kerem Shalom; it opened Kerem Shalom. We asked it to open a crossing in the north; Erez is now open. We pushed it again and again on the opening of Ashdod port; that is now open. There are not as many ships as I would like, but we have UK involvement in the Cyprus maritime

corridor. Also, the Americans, others, and ourselves said that if it would accept a pier on the beach, we do not think it is necessarily the best way of doing things but it means that the aid goes directly into Gaza. That is now there. It is not true or fair to say that action has not been taken. It just has not been enough, and we will keep pushing. I am speaking to Minister Gantz in about half an hour, and I will have another good go then.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-21/debates/7380B21A-3BFE-49A9-9FCE-02080D2807A7/Conflict-InducedFoodInsecurity>

The Foreign Secretary's comment referred to above by Lord Browne of Ladyton can be read at https://x.com/David_Cameron/status/1779829477419192609

The International Criminal Court announcement that it will seek arrest warrants, referred to above by Lord Browne of Ladyton, can be read at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state>

The Rome Statute, referred to above by Lord Browne of Ladyton, can be read at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Rome-Statute.pdf>

The Colonna report, referred to above by Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, can be read at https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf

House of Lords Written Answer

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat) [HL4287] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for giving greater weight to a durable and sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians by recognising Palestinian statehood.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the Prime Minister has made clear, the UK supports a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. We agree that the people of the West Bank and Gaza must be given the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future. And it needs to be irreversible.

We believe that recognition of Palestinian statehood should not come at the start of a new process, but it does not have to be at the very end of the process.

We must start by resolving the immediate crisis in Gaza. Gaza is an Occupied Palestinian Territory and must be part of a future Palestinian state. However, Hamas is still in control of parts of Gaza, and Israeli hostages remain in captivity - this shows that we are still at the start of the process.

Ensuring Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza and removing Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel are essential and unavoidable steps on the road to lasting peace; as is working together to support the new Palestinian government as it takes much-needed steps on reform and resumes governance in Gaza as well as the West Bank.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-01/hl4287>

House of Commons International Development Committee

Committee Chair comments on ICAI's report on the UK's humanitarian aid to Gaza
Chair of the International Development Committee, Sarah Champion MP, said: "How can we say that people trapped in Gaza are being treated in accordance with international

humanitarian law – or that the UK’s representations are having any meaningful effect? This independent review affirms what the Committee saw when we visited the region as far back as February, what we have heard in evidence from aid workers on the ground - who have seen far too many of their colleagues killed and injured - and what the whole world is now finally seeing.

“Some countries are choosing to respond with serious action: limiting arms sales to Israel and restoring funding to UNWRA. The FCDO’s response to our IDC report on the situation was full of the right words and the UK’s increased aid to Gaza was very welcome, but in the reality of the situation on the ground these are nothing more than a gesture. Despite all the diplomatic efforts and promises secured, a total of 59 aid trucks crossed into Gaza between 5 and 13 May – the rest turned back on excuses as flimsy as containing fruits with stones in them. Before this horror, 500 aid trucks were entering Gaza daily to meet normal need.

“The people of Gaza are being starved, deprived of water, and indiscriminately killed and injured. Medics and aid workers are dying. Mass graves are being uncovered. The money and words the UK Government has thrown at this situation have been ineffectual, but let’s not pretend we are powerless. Enough is enough. The UK must now step up to its proper place in the international humanitarian system and take effective action.”

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/98/international-development-committee/news/201550/committee-chair-comments-on-icaais-report-on-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-to-gaza/>

The ICAI report referred to above can be read at

<https://icaei.independent.gov.uk/html-version/uk-humanitarian-aid-to-gaza/>

Independent Committee for Aid Impact

UK humanitarian aid to Gaza

<https://icaei.independent.gov.uk/html-version/uk-humanitarian-aid-to-gaza/>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Humza Yousaf (SNP) [S6M-13303] International Criminal Court – That the Parliament notes what it sees as the significant development from International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor, Karim Khan KC, to apply for arrest warrants against leaders of the Israeli government and leaders of Hamas; recognises what it considers to be the seriousness of the reported alleged crimes, including murder, rape, starvation and torture; believes that the ICC must be allowed to carry out its work unimpeded and without intimidation or threat of sanction; further believes that there must be equal application of the law, and that no one is above the law, regardless of whether they are state or non-state actors; expresses its concern at the UK Government opposing the actions of the ICC; demands that arms sales to Israel are immediately halted by the UK Government, and continues to call for all hostages to be released, and for an immediate ceasefire to be agreed to.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-13303>

Karim Khan’s announcement of his decision to apply for arrest warrants, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state>

Speakers in Security Council Urge Israel to Stop Military Incursions into Rafah: No Words Found for Humanitarian Catastrophe in Gaza, UN Aid Official Warns

... **Tor Wennesland, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, noting that talks for the release of all hostages held in Gaza and a ceasefire ended on 9 May without agreement, said: "I fear the worst for the beleaguered and terrified civilians in Rafah, for the hostages held in unimaginable conditions for more than 225 days, and for the overstretched humanitarian operation that remains on the brink in the Strip." Noting that Israel Defence Forces' operations and military manoeuvres in and around Rafah have intensified, he said that on 5 May, Hamas launched mortars and rockets at soldiers massed on the Israeli side of Karem Abu Salem/Kerem Shalom crossing, killing four and wounding 10 of them. Israel Defense Forces' tank shelling and a series of air strikes in Rafah killed at least 19 Palestinians on the same day, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, he said.

The following day, he added, the Israel Defense Forces said it would operate with "extreme force" against Hamas in eastern Rafah and ordered 100,000 Palestinians to immediately evacuate to what it described as an "expanded humanitarian area in Al-Mawasi". ...

The current trajectory, he said, will further undermine efforts to scale up the entry of humanitarian goods and their safe distribution to desperate civilians. ...

"There can be no long-term solution in Gaza that is not fundamentally political," he underscored. The new Palestinian Government, with eight ministers from Gaza, represents an important opportunity to support tangible steps towards unifying Gaza and the occupied West Bank politically, economically and administratively. Calling on the international community to support the new Government, he called for assistance in addressing its fiscal challenges, strengthening its governance capacity and preparing it to reassume its responsibilities in Gaza and, ultimately, govern the whole of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. ...

Edem Wosornu, Director, Operations and Advocacy Division, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ... noted that living conditions continue to deteriorate particularly in Jabalaya and eastern Rafah and the number of casualties continues to increase. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, more than 35,000 people have now been killed in the violence, and more than 79,000 injured, she said. Gaza's health-care system is under impossible strain. In Rafah, 21 medical points, four primary health-care centres and four hospitals are now inaccessible. In the north, two hospitals, five primary health-care centres and 16 medical points are inaccessible, she said, adding that an estimated 14,000 critical patients currently require medical evacuation.

Seventy-five per cent of the population — 1.7 million people — has been forcibly displaced within Gaza, many of them up to four or five times, including because of repeated evacuation instructions from the Israel Defense Forces. In the past two weeks, more than 800,000 people have been displaced from Rafah into other areas of Gaza, she said, emphasizing unequivocally that those forcibly displaced must be guaranteed the right to voluntarily return, as international law demands. ...

The Rafah incursion is making an already fragile aid operation even more difficult, she said. As of 17 May, the Rafah crossing remains inaccessible for humanitarian cargo, fuel and personnel movement. Around 82,000 metric tons of supplies are stranded on the Egypt side of the crossing with food spoiling and medicines expiring. Fuel shortages, meanwhile, impacts the functioning of bakeries, hospitals, water wells and other critical infrastructure. The crossing at Kerem Shalom is extremely difficult for aid organizations to access from the Gaza side due to hostilities, challenging logistical conditions and complex coordination procedures. ...

The representative of the United Kingdom said the situation in Gaza is desperate as the toll on civilians grows. The United Kingdom is clear it would not support an expanded

operation in Rafah unless there is a very clear plan to protect people and save lives. ... Israel must fulfil its commitments to increase aid and guarantee deconfliction for aid convoys and other humanitarian work. The fastest way to end the conflict is to secure a deal which returns the hostages and pauses the fighting. ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

The representative of France said she was profoundly concerned by the situation in Rafah, which continues to deteriorate. ... she noted the forced transfer of civilian populations is a war crime. The closure of the Rafah border point has devastating consequences for civilians at a time when humanitarian aid entering Gaza is patently insufficient, she said, adding that the humanitarian and health situation is unbearable. ...

The representative of Switzerland called for an immediate ceasefire and a halt to the current military operation in Rafah, whose consequences for a civilian population that has been prey to bombardments, repeated displacements and famine for over seven months are unacceptable. ... Further, she rejected deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects protected under international law, called for the release of the hostages and reiterated the duty to ensure the safety, protection and freedom of movement of humanitarian organization personnel. ...

The representative of China said that 220 days into the Gaza conflict Member States witnessed an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Despite the calls for a ceasefire, Israel has chosen to turn a deaf ear and advance a large-scale offensive in Rafah. “Nothing can justify the perpetuation of conflict,” he stressed, adding that the collective punishment of civilians does not create conditions conducive to the rescue of hostages. ...

The representative of the Russian Federation said the humanitarian situation in Gaza is unprecedented and continues to escalate. “When it comes to Gaza, there simply is no safe zones,” he said, condemning attacks on UN representatives and humanitarian personnel and expressing support for the Secretary-General’s call to conduct an independent international investigation into the deaths of those who were helping Palestinians. The wounded and the ill are unable to receive the necessary care amid military hostilities, and civilian life is becoming even more unbearable, he said. A ceasefire looks elusive. “The current Israeli leadership is bent on pursuing military hostilities despite the increasingly obvious inability to achieve all of the stated objectives of their operation,” he said, cautioning: “Unfortunately, such obstinacy threatens the lives of Israeli hostages, too. With each passing day, the likelihood of relatives seeing their loved ones alive dims.” ...

The representative of the United States expressed his country’s “iron-clad commitment” to Israel’s self-defence, stating, however, that it will not support an Israeli reoccupation of Gaza. Reiterating objection to any large-scale military operation in Rafah that risks mass civilian harm, he noted the displacement of 800,000 civilians from the city in recent days, with displaced Palestinians facing life-threatening conditions, including “the threat of mass contagion from raw sewage”. ...

Noting the first shipments of humanitarian assistance that arrived on the shores of Gaza through the “multinational humanitarian pier”, he highlighted the “the tireless work” of his country and partners in enabling this. The United States will continue to work to further increase the amount of aid getting into Gaza by land crossings, he said, adding that it has also proposed alternatives to a major ground offensive in Rafah that “we believe will better advance Israel’s goal of an enduring defeat of Hamas”. ...

The Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine said Gaza will haunt the conscience of the world long after this genocide stops. “And stop it must,” he said, “Now.” Israel is deliberately destroying life in Gaza and is not deterred by the rules of international law or positions adopted by States or international bodies. It will only be deterred by resolute action holding it accountable for its decisions and forcing it to change course. The whole world opposed Israel’s assault on Rafah, and yet, Israel is proceeding. Israel has pushed

an entire population to the southern border of Gaza, to Rafah, through mass killing and destruction. Israel must pull out from the Rafah crossing, open all crossings and allow the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid and withdraw its occupation forces from the Gaza Strip. He said Israel has determined its enemies, which include the Palestinian people, the United Nations, the Council, the Assembly, the world courts and “every State on Earth that dares to denounce its crimes”.

While the Council speaks often of the international law-based order, Israel is asking the Council to destroy this order so it can continue killing the Palestinian people and annex their land in full impunity. “It will not listen to reason or to your protests, to your calls or your demands,” he said, adding that Israel has gone further and further in its breach of the Charter and the law. He believes that very soon a tipping point will be reached at which countries will stand up to defend freedom, justice and peace. He urged the Council to use all its tools to stop the massacres.

The representative of Israel said that “in an act of outrageous absurdity and moral bankruptcy” the International Criminal Court’s Chief Prosecutor announced that he will seek arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders. “This is a despicable and unforgettable day, in which an immoral equivalence is being made between a terror organization and the leaders of a vibrant democracy,” he stressed, adding that international organizations “have lost their way”. While the “forces of evil” have physical weapons, they also have diplomatic and legal weapons — “an arsenal of evil that includes weaponization of this institution and its bodies,” he observed, adding that “all have become tools in the hands of monsters”. Noting that the Council held a moment of silence to commemorate the “mass-murdering” President of Iran, he asked: “What’s next? Will the Council hold a moment of silence for Bin Laden? Will there be a vigil for Hitler?” ...

What started the war was “sheer evil perpetrated by Hamas”, he recalled, reiterating that the way to end it is by holding terrorists accountable. Noting that Israel entered Gaza to bring the hostages home, he emphasized: “We did not want to be in Gaza. We do not want to be in Gaza. We have no intentions of staying in Gaza. It is only about saving lives.” Calling on the Council to designate Hamas as a terrorist organization, he stressed: “Show them that the Council no longer follows their script.” ...

The representative of Egypt, highlighting Israel’s approach to deliberately turn the Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable place, said that despite continued mediation efforts by his country, Qatar and the United States, as well as multiple Council resolutions, “the response was another military operation in Rafah”. ...

The flow of humanitarian aid through the Rafah border crossing has stopped as a direct result of the continued Israeli military operation, he said, adding that this is also a direct threat to the lives of humanitarian workers. Humanitarian action in Rafah “has become tantamount to a suicide mission”, he said, adding: “You all are fully aware that Israel has been aiming, since the beginning of the war, to turn the Gaza Strip into an uninhabitable place.” It is possible to resume humanitarian action if Israel withdrew immediately from the Rafah border crossing and opened all six border crossings to Gaza from the Israeli side. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15701.doc.htm>

Security Council: Protection of civilians in armed conflict

... **Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide**, noted that, unlike other similarly important mandates such as sexual violence in conflict and children in armed conflict, which report annually through the Secretary-General to the Security Council, no such annual reporting has been established for the prevention-of-genocide mandate. ...

“Genocide does not happen overnight. Genocide is part of a process that is well-planned, prepared and followed through,” ...

Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, briefed the Council on the Secretary-General’s latest report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (document S/2024/385) ... “The situation of civilians in armed conflict in 2023 was resoundingly dire,” she said, citing conflicts in Gaza, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Sahel, Somalia, Syria and Ukraine. ...

“Forced displacement also remained a defining feature of armed conflicts,” she observed, adding that by mid-year, a record-breaking 110 million people globally were displaced due to conflict, persecution, violence and human rights violations or abuses. Conflict was also the major driver of staggeringly high levels of hunger, with 117 million people across 19 conflict-affected countries or territories experiencing crisis levels of acute food insecurity or even higher. In 14 conflicts in 2023, not counting the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 91 humanitarian workers were tragically killed, 120 wounded and 53 abducted. In Gaza alone, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) lost 142 staff members in the violence between October and December. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Health Organization (WHO) each lost a staff member. ...

The representative of the Russian Federation pointed out that the Secretary-General’s report mentions the situation of hunger in Gaza in one paragraph. Nor do the recommendations of the report address this paragraph, as if the famine in Gaza were just another episode among many armed conflicts. ...

The representative of the United Kingdom, noting a 72 per cent increase in civilian deaths in armed conflict from 2022 to 2023, voiced concern over escalating violence in El Fasher, Sudan, the deaths of civilians in Israel and Gaza, and the shocking levels of conflict-related sexual violence in the central Sahel and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. ... [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

The representative of France expressed alarm over increased and exacerbated humanitarian crises in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Haiti, Yemen and Syria. ... She also underlined her country’s commitment to a two-State solution for the Israel-Palestine conflict, condemned the Russian Federation’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and underlined the need to combat impunity. ...

The representative of China said the Council must urgently facilitate an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza and urge Israel to immediately stop its collective punishment of the Palestinian people and to stop advancing its military attacks on Rafah. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must never be the target of military operations. Humanitarian assistance must not be politicized and basic goods such as food and medicine must not be weaponized, he added, urging the Council to continue to uphold and ensure the universal and consistent application of international humanitarian law. Double standards and selective application of international humanitarian law are tantamount to condoning more violations, he emphasized. ...

The representative of Egypt drew attention to the suffering of the Palestinian people amid Israel’s continued violations of the rules of international law. The conflict has cost the lives of over 34,000 people, mostly women and children. Due to Israel’s illegal aggression in Gaza, most of the hospitals there are now unusable, he observed, noting the disastrous effects of such destruction of vital infrastructure on defenceless civilians. Against this backdrop, he called for a ceasefire, noting that the Geneva Conventions prohibit inflicting such suffering on civilians. He underscored the need to guarantee stability in the region and hold Israel accountable, reiterating his country’s firm position of preventing forced displacement of Palestinians.

The representative of Türkiye expressed concern over the “erosion” of respect for international humanitarian law, the deliberate targeting of aid workers and civilian

infrastructure and the obstruction of humanitarian assistance. Underscoring that abandoning international law in Gaza “will only bring more instability, more conflict and more suffering”, she said that the international community demands an immediate ceasefire; the protection of civilians and the infrastructure on which they depend; and the unhindered delivery of aid into the Strip. ...

The representative of Jordan ... [said] The number of martyrs, women and children in Gaza due to the Israeli occupation army’s barbaric war against Palestinian civilians has exceeded the number of victims of all conflicts and wars in the last year combined, he emphasized, lamenting the failure of the international community and the Council to impose a permanent ceasefire, protect defenseless civilians and allow the sustainable entry of basic humanitarian aid to all parts of Gaza. ...

The representative of Lebanon said that since 8 October, his country has been “the victim of yet another aggression by Israel”, an aggression that has targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure. Israel has killed more than 80 of his country’s civilians, including 26 women, 14 children, 18 health workers and three journalists. It has injured more than 1,000 civilians and displaced more than 93,000 civilians. According to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), an Israeli tank killed Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah in October 2023 by firing at a group of “clearly identifiable journalists” in violation of international law. “These are just a few examples of the magnitude of the crimes being committed by Israel against us on a daily basis,” he said, asking how many more lives should be lost before these atrocities stop. ...

The representative of Qatar, aligning herself with the Arab Group, pointed out that the Israeli occupation continues its aggression against unarmed civilians in the Gaza Strip, using policies of forced displacement, starvation and collective punishment as well as targeting humanitarian relief and medical workers. She also condemned the bombardment of Rafah — as well as the threat of forcibly displacing people from their shelters and homes — and called on the international community to “prevent the offensive against this city” and the commission of genocide. ...

The representative of Belgium, noting the chilling increase of civilian deaths among women and children, expressed solidarity with the families of victims. “Gaza has become the symbol of what is at stake” in the discussion on protection of civilians, he said, noting the intensification of the Israeli military offensive despite Council resolutions. ...

The representative of South Africa said that the selective application of international law — “the hypocrisy and the double standards displayed by some Member States” — has resulted in prolonged conflict and civilian suffering. Asking whether lives in some parts of the world are worth more than others, he answered: “By actions and words — or, rather, inaction and silence in some cases — it appears so.” The utter disregard for international law in Gaza cannot go unchallenged, and it is within this context that South Africa again approached the International Court of Justice on 16 May, amidst the intensified crisis in Rafah and a humanitarian crisis beyond measure. ...

The representative of Cyprus ... voiced concern over worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza. Given its geographical proximity, Cyprus — in coordination with humanitarian partners and other countries — initiated the establishment of the Cyprus Maritime Corridor Initiative, which outlines a mechanism for securely delivering significant quantities of assistance to the Strip via sea. The maritime corridor is part of a sustained effort to increase the flow of humanitarian aid and commercial commodities into Gaza through all possible routes. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15702.doc.htm>

Protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2024/385)

<https://undocs.org/en/S/2024/385>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answers

Jordan: Hezbollah

Bob Blackman (Conservative) [25831] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of reports of Hezbollah plans to establish a new militia in Jordan.

David Rutley: We are aware of these reports and will continue to monitor Kataib Hezbollah's (KH) activity. The Iranian regime bear responsibility for the actions of groups they have long supported, including KH and other non-state actors. In a recent phone call with the King of Jordan, the Prime Minister reiterated our staunch support for the security of Jordan and the wider region.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25831>

Turkey: Politics and Government

Jonathan Gullis (Conservative) [26291] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the reported remarks by President Erdogan on 21 March 2024.

Nusrat Ghani: President Erdogan made an election campaign speech on 21 March which covered several areas, including the conflict in Gaza and the strengthening economy. On Gaza, the UK will maintain a dialogue with Turkey as a NATO ally and key actor on several conflicts in the region. On the economy, the UK has now launched negotiations for an upgraded Free Trade Agreement that will benefit both our economies.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26291>

TOP

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>

Amendment Paper

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0155/amend/criminal_rm_rep_0522.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>

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>

Amendment Paper

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0007/amend/holocaust_day_cwh_0522.pdf

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

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

Faith school designation reforms (closing date 20 June 2024)

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

Review of the RSHE statutory guidance (closing date 11 July 2024)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/rshe-team/review-of-the-rshe-statutory-guidance/>

£20k registration threshold for charities in Northern Ireland (closing date 11 August 2024)

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-ps20k-registration-threshold-charities-northern-ireland>

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