



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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See also Commons written answer 26176 “Ghassan Abu-Sittah” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Political Violence and Disruption: Walney Report

col 894 The Minister for Security (Tom Tugendhat): ... Lord Walney’s timely and compelling report identifies a rising tide of extremism in this country. Its central finding is that political intimidation and the incitement of hatred by extremist groups and individuals are infringing on the essential rights and freedoms of the British people and those they choose to represent them in politics. ...

Lord Walney eloquently describes the threat posed by the extreme right as well as the extreme left, whose activists, in his words, “systematically seek to undermine faith in our parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.” ...

I was particularly struck by the section on protests at schools. The purpose of schools, as I am sure we can all agree, is to educate our children and to teach students how to think, not what to think. Our teachers must be free to do this without fear or favour. While it is right that schools consult parents on sensitive issues, it is not their job to appease pressure groups, self-appointed community activists or religious institutions. That is why I was deeply concerned by the aggressive protests targeting schools detailed in Lord Walney’s report. It is unacceptable that, in Birmingham, one assistant head had to be escorted in

and out of their school for their own safety. It is unacceptable that, in Batley, a teacher and his family are reportedly still in hiding after being accused of blasphemy.

There is no right not to be offended in this country. No religion or belief system is immune from criticism or exempted from our liberal democratic tradition. Blasphemy laws are incompatible with British values and principles. The effect that these incidents have had is utterly unacceptable. ...

col 895 This Government will take every possible step to safeguard the people and institutions upon which our democracy depends. ...

As Lord Walney sets out, it is vital that we take action to manage and limit the impact of protests that descend into violence and disruption. These have not just resulted in vile displays of antisemitism on our streets and aggressive, disruptive tactics deployed by some protestors; they have also drained police resources, as officers are redeployed away from their frontline duties ...

... over the coming weeks, the Government will look carefully at Lord Walney's recommendations on public order, and will look at changing the thresholds for imposing conditions on protests and the way in which they are applied. This includes amending the threshold to prevent protests from going ahead on account of the cumulative impact of serious disruption, or where there is the threat of intimidating and abusive conduct based on the persistence of previous arrests.

In addition, we will consider Lord Walney's recommendation for putting greater responsibilities on protest organisers to limit disruption, and to allow the police to account for demands on their resources in setting conditions, to ensure wider public safety in their jurisdictions beyond protests. ...

In this vein, the Government have updated the definition of extremism to be used by Government Departments and officials, alongside a set of engagement principles. This is to ensure that they do not, inadvertently or otherwise, provide a platform, funding or legitimacy to groups or individuals who attempt to advance extremist ideologies that would deny our fundamental rights and freedoms. ...

col 896 There is no doubt that extremism poses a threat to our democracy. Left unchecked, it would eat away at the very foundations of our society and the liberties of our people. ...

Dan Jarvis (Labour): ... It is important to say from the outset that the Opposition absolutely respect the fundamental freedom to make legitimate, peaceful protest but, when that freedom is abused to intimidate, harass and harm others, safeguards must be put in place to protect the public and our democratic system as a whole. We have seen in recent months that people have been intimidated and have felt threatened due to protest activity. I therefore agree with the Minister that this is totally unacceptable, and there must be no no-go areas in our country. That is why we have been crystal clear that where there are public order offences, hate crime offences or terrorist offences on marches and demonstrations, they must face the full force of the law. ...

... I will touch on two points ... The first point relates to whether the police should have more powers to ban protests that are intimidating or disruptive. It is important to note that the police already have powers under the Public Order Act 1986 to place conditions on protests, including amending routes and timings. They also have the power, in cases where there may be serious public disorder, to apply to the Home Secretary to prohibit a particular protest from taking place.

col 897 In addition, we have already had several new pieces of public order legislation in recent years ... That said, we will look at this recommendation in more depth and see what the Government bring forward, because it is vital that everyone in our country feels safe on our streets.

The second point relates to protest organisers paying policing costs. ... Again, we think the focus at the moment should be on making existing legislation work but, as with the rest of the report, we will examine these recommendations in more depth and see what the

Government bring forward. ...

The report has been published amid activity across Government to counter extremism, bolster community cohesion and protect our democracy from malign forces ...

Lord Walney's work started in 2021 and, entirely understandably, had to be revised in the aftermath of the 7 October attacks. ...

Tom Tugendhat: ... I am particularly grateful that the hon. Gentleman is open to looking at certain areas of this report seriously, such as the question of where costs should lie.

col/ 898 We will be discussing with DLUHC—as he knows, it is an important participant in this discussion—and other relevant departments, including the Ministry of Justice, how to take these recommendations forward and which to adopt. ...

Julian Lewis (Conservative): ... I wish to draw particular attention to Lord Walney's recommendation 20 on requiring the organisers of repeated protest marches to contribute to the cost of policing. ... Even if one says there should be a wider regime where political protest is concerned, after one large protest on a particular cause, the repetition of the same protest week in, week out—possibly for intimidatory purposes—should certainly not be cost-free to the organisers.

Tom Tugendhat: ... When people assemble at sites that should otherwise be free for groups to associate in, whether that is churches or village halls, the important thing is that our democracy is able to be performed there. ...

Alison Thewliss (SNP): On the SNP Benches, we stand firmly against intimidation, violence and extremism anywhere. We stand against antisemitism, Islamophobia and hate in all its pernicious forms. But this report goes nowhere near tackling the causes of hate and violence. To recommend—as it does in many different ways—clamping down further on people's right to protest is entirely inappropriate. ...

col/ 899 I also ask the Minister if he will take this opportunity to clarify what the Prime Minister said the other week when he put people who support the democratic self-determination of their country in the same bracket as those who support extremist regimes around the world. Scottish nationalists are not extremists. ...

Tom Tugendhat: ... Over the past few weeks and months, I have seen members of our communities terrified to walk the streets of our country. I have seen people, particularly from the Jewish community, but from many others as well, fearful that the radicalisation and violence threatened by some of the protests is threatening them. I have also spoken to friends in the Muslim community who are terrified that their children will be radicalised into groups that advocate violence. I think it is the job of this Government—of any British Government—to defend the interests of all our citizens. I make absolutely no apology for standing up against extremism; whether it seeks to target Jews, young Muslims or anybody else, it is simply unacceptable.

The suggestions that Lord Walney has set out are just that—suggestions. ... However, if liberty means anything, it means the ability to travel freely to the synagogue on Saturday, to the mosque on Friday, and to the church on Sunday. It means being free from intimidation. ...

col/ 900 **Desmond Swayne (Conservative):** Having organised a number of demonstrations myself, I am nervous at the prospect of being invited to contribute financially to their policing. Nevertheless, clearly there are public order issues and issues of great public nuisance ... When there are a repeated series of demonstrations, may I suggest that the Government explore the possibility of confining them to a static demonstration, be it at Speakers' Corner or elsewhere?

Tom Tugendhat: My right hon. Friend ... highlights the important aspect that, time and again, we have seen protests stretching and spreading, and being allowed to effectively close down large areas of a city or town, when in reality the point is made

long before the march. ...

Michael Fabricant (Conservative): Lord Walney ... talks about preventing protests from going ahead on account of the “cumulative impact” of serious disruption. He is right to identify that; it is intimidatory and ... many Jewish people, Muslims and others are frightened of going on the streets because of it. ...

col 901 **Miriam Cates (Conservative):** ... [The report] contains 78 references to social media, which of course has been instrumental in allowing extremists not only to organise but to spread their message. The social media algorithms reward radicalism, fake news and division. ... does the Minister agree that it is the anonymity of online accounts that is particularly pernicious? When we speak in real life, our free speech comes with accountability, but that is not the case online because there are so many anonymous accounts. ...

Tom Tugendhat: ... All of us in this House will have had that Jekyll and Hyde experience of meeting someone in person who has previously been utterly vitriolic online—like seeing a country parson walking down the lane, and then discovering from their social media that Satan himself could not have come up with more bile. It is quite remarkable. ...

col 902 By and large, people approach issues in our democracy from a position of interest in the common good and support for each other, their families, communities and neighbours, but the treatment that somehow comes out of people when they are anonymous can be simply vile.

Holly Lynch (Labour): Earlier this week, I met a female chief fire officer who explained to me some of the intimidation, harassment and abuse that she had experienced, alongside some of her female colleagues in senior leadership roles in our emergency services, up to and including credible death threats. As far as I can tell, that is for no other reason than that they have the audacity to be women in senior leadership roles in our emergency services. ...

Tom Tugendhat: ... Yesterday I was talking to Festus Akinbusoye about the racism he faced as police and crime commissioner. Whether people are in a public-facing role in our emergency services—our ambulance, police or fire crews, for example—or they hold an elected position, from Prime Minister to parish councillor, the idea that they should face any hostility at all is unacceptable, but the idea that they should be targeted because of their sex, race, gender or religion is even more unacceptable. ...

col 903 **Joanna Cherry (SNP):** ... I consider the recommendations to be largely far too draconian. The Joint Committee on Human Rights, which I chair, has repeatedly stressed that public authorities, including the Government and the police, are under a negative obligation not to interfere with the right to peaceful protest, and a positive obligation to facilitate peaceful protest. Yesterday’s High Court ruling ... gave a very clear message that, in regulating protest, the Government must act within the law, and they must not pursue an anti-protest agenda at the expense of human rights, particularly freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. I would like a cast-iron assurance from the Minister that protection of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and the right to protest will be at the heart of the Government’s consideration of the report’s recommendations.

Tom Tugendhat: ... This is a challenging report. The points that she makes about our having the civil rights to assemble, debate and discuss are correct. This Government are not trying to—and never will try to—silence the British people. Hearing the voices of our fellow citizens in the ways in which they choose to express them is, of course, part of a democracy, but the ways in which they choose to express them is also mitigated by the ways in which we choose to live as a community. Those choices we call laws ...

col 904 **Tom Hunt (Conservative):** ... As somebody who believes in freedom of protest, do I believe that there should be an unlimited, totally unfettered right to cause huge

disruption to the majority of people who just want to go about their lives, no matter the economic cost? ... No, I do not think that there should be a totally unfettered, unlimited right ... Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when it comes to hate—be that anti-Muslim hate or some of the antisemitism we have seen in recent months—it should be tackled and be seen to be tackled as it is happening, not simply after the event?

Tom Tugendhat: ... We have seen the police taking some very good action on some of these protests. I think about 600 or 700 people—I might be slightly out on the numbers, so forgive me—have now been arrested following the protests that we have regularly seen on these weekends. About 50 or so have been arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000, which is just to say that these are not small arrests, but serious crimes with which the police are dealing.

I would like to make my next point extremely clearly. It is a point that was made to me by a middle-class Muslim family—not in my constituency—who have been friends of mine for many years. One of them said to me something that struck home very hard. They have been trying to protect their teenage kids, as we all do, from the kind of hatred and inspiration to hatred that is now all too prevalent online, through social media and sometimes other means. They do what responsible parents do: they make sure that their kids are home at a reasonable hour, and that they are part of community groups that support their lifestyle and values. Then they see broadcast on national media the kind of despicable hatred that inspires people to radicalisation and extremism and, sadly, they say, “It is not your son who is likely to be radicalised into Islamist hatred; it is mine.” I am afraid that he is absolutely right.

It is the responsibility of this Government, and any British Government, to protect the interests of every British citizen. Frankly, it would be racist and deeply unacceptable to consider that the radicalisation of one child is worth more or less than that of another. ... That is why we will stand up against it. That is why ... some of these protests are not just public order offences, but incitement to radicalisation and hatred, and they should be treated as such immediately.

col 905 Stella Creasy (Labour Co-op): ... The Minister talked earlier about the difference between online and offline, but for many of us there is now no distinction in the intimidation and aggression that we face. If liberty means anything for elected officials, it means being able to take time off and go to the park. Last week, a man made my toddler cry because he would not leave us alone in the street, and was instead determined to call me a child killer in front of her because he did not agree with my views on abortion...

I am not alone in being targeted on my own ... the parliamentary police tell me that such behaviour is completely normal and acceptable within a democracy, that this man had a right to express his opinion, that MPs should expect to be contacted wherever they are in the street and whoever is with them, and that if our families are distressed that is just unfortunate. ...

Tom Tugendhat: I offer my deepest sympathies to the hon. Lady, because that is completely unacceptable. ...

col 906 Caroline Lucas (Green): I stand against extremism, hate and violence in all forms, but I still think that the report is extraordinarily dangerous, draconian and undemocratic. The pretence that it is in any way independent is totally undermined by a quick glance at the entry in the Register of Lords’ Interests of its author, who works for lobby companies that represent arms manufacturers and fossil fuel companies. Will the Minister at the very least reassure us that the Government will reject recommendation 27, which undermines jury trials in cases related to climate change and anti-racism, and instead uphold our great legal tradition of allowing juries to decide as they see fit? Will he also accept the High Court’s judgment in Liberty’s case against the Home Office and abandon any further restrictions on the right to peaceful protest, and instead protect all our rights to freedom of expression and association?

Tom Tugendhat: We are reviewing the decision in the courts yesterday, and we will look at whether or not to appeal.

Neil Coyle (Labour): ... London bears a disproportionate burden of the protests and countering extremism, so how will the Minister ensure that the Met's operational costs are met by this Government for the rising challenges outlined in the report? ...

Florence Eshalomi (Labour Co-op): ... I hope that [the Minister] will agree that liberty also means the right to protest. That is a cornerstone of our democracy, and people have the right to protest in a peaceful and respectful manner. ... We know that protests can be difficult and complex, and remain an operational issue. ... does [the Minister] agree that for this to work Ministers and politicians must respect the operational independence of all police forces?

Tom Tugendhat: The hon. Lady is right that the police are operationally independent, but they are not independent of the considerations of the people they serve ... it is important to balance different rights. Of course there is a right to protest. People have a fundamental democratic right to raise their voice in opposition to things that they find objectionable. People also have a simple right to be able to feed their family, take their kids to school, or attend a place of worship. When the two are in conflict, it is right that the police set a reasonable balance. I think Lord Walney is suggesting that that balance should be looked at carefully.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/0C514E83-B3EA-4F58-845B-6174FB5D81CB/PoliticalViolenceAndDisruptionWalneyReport>

The High Court judgement referred to above by Joanna Cherry and Caroline Lucas can be read at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/National-Council-for-Civil-Liberties-v-Secretary-of-State-for-the-Home-Department-judgment.pdf>

The Walney Review: Protecting our Democracy from Coercion

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66462426b7249a4c6e9d3687/E03131940_HC_775_Walney_Review_v02_PRINT.pdf

House of Commons Written Answer

Community Relations: Religion

Stephen Timms (Labour) [26028] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what steps his Department is taking to help quantify the (a) economic and (b) social value of faith groups to the UK.

Simon Hoare: Faith is a vital part of peoples' identities and of their communities. It guides the moral outlook of many, inspiring great numbers of people to public service. This Government recognises the huge contribution of people of faith to public life, and supports the work of faith groups across the country to provide help to those in need.

We are currently considering the findings and recommendations of Colin Bloom's independent review on faith engagement, published last year. This review presents us with an opportunity to understand better the contribution of faith groups to our society, and the vital role that they play in our national life.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26028>

The Review referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64478b4f529eda00123b0397/The_Bloom_Review.pdf

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Committee Debate

Committee Stage: Holocaust Memorial Bill

col 935 Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... In one of the explanations of the present proposal, to put a box with 23 fins in the middle of Victoria Tower Gardens, a design that was not accepted for Ottawa before it was submitted for London, we were told that people would come out of the experience looking at Parliament—at democracy. In fact, if it happens, they will come out and look at the House of Lords. ...

... the Government and their agency made plain they did not want most of the money spent on construction and building; they wanted most of it spent on education. In terms of education about the Holocaust, we are in difficult times. Protests in London mean the existing Holocaust memorial gets covered up for protection and, if the present proposal goes ahead, it will be quite often be closed on security grounds.

When the Government put forward their proposal, the indication was it would cost £25 million from Government and £25 million raised from charitable sources. Since then, my guess is—I hope the Minister will correct me—that £40 million has already been spent without anything being achieved. ...

col 936 In the eight or nine years since then, the Imperial War Museum has totally reordered and expanded its Holocaust Galleries, the Jewish Museum has closed and the Wiener collection is in some difficulty. If the Government were serious about getting most of the money spent on education, they would have already diverted money to the Wiener collection and the Jewish Museum, and they would have charged up the Holocaust Memorial Trust with money. ... If they were serious about education, the Government would not have waited to get some kind of memorial up, and possibly some kind of learning centre associated with it, before they started to get on with the educational work. ...

col 937 The arguments against using Victoria Tower Gardens are clear. It is an area of quiet recreation for people who live locally. ...

On a number of occasions, the King's counsel leading for the Government in front of the Select Committee, said that what has been considered by the Committee was not planning permission. He constantly said that planning would be dealt with in the normal way. The normal way is for an application—because the present one has been squashed—to go to the local authority. The Government can, if they choose to do so, call it in if they think that the local authority has got it wrong or it is of national importance. They should not, in this case, have regarded it as of national importance to stop the local authority having the option of considering the interests of local residents ...

Under the present proposals, we will not be able just to walk in. We will have to be cleared by security and that, at times of heightened security, the memorial will either be closed or there will be airport-style security, which is not the point of a memorial to the victims and to the dedication that it should not happen again. ...

col 939 I end with words from the Holocaust survivors who gave evidence at the Committee, who said, in summary, that the proposal is too big for the gardens and too small for its purpose.

col 940 John Stevenson (Conservative): ... I fully support the idea and concept of a Holocaust memorial and learning centre ... I recognise that this is an incredibly important project, and one that is probably as important now as it ever has been in the past. The idea of a specific memorial is entirely appropriate, but the concept and idea of a learning centre is in many respects vital and, in my view, the most significant part of the project. It is coming up to 80 years since the end of world war two and there are fewer people who have a direct link with that time or indeed with what happened during the second world war. Therefore, it is even more important we do not forget and that we ensure that we learn

from what happened then and educate for the future. ...

However ... I have concluded that there are some serious issues that need to be properly addressed before this specific scheme potentially proceeds—if it does at all. ...

We all want to see a successful scheme. We want to see it constructed in a timely fashion, and arguably too long has already passed. We want it to be built in the right location, and at a cost that is realistic and fair. If I may be so bold, I would suggest that such a scheme could be built quite quickly at the Imperial War Museum and fulfil all the ambitions and wishes of the original Committee and everybody in this House. ...

col 941 Let me turn to my two amendments. Amendment 1 would address the overall cost: the original amount set aside by the Government to kick-start an endowment fund was £50 million, as set out in 2015 by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron. By 2017, the figure quoted was still £50 million, but then the costs started to increase. In 2018, they had risen to an estimated £102 million, of which the Government would fund £75 million, and private donations the rest. We now have a cost estimate of around £138 million, but are we really suggesting that when the digging starts in Victoria Tower Gardens, the costs will remain anywhere near that? ... In 2021, the then Minister announced that entry to the site would be free. The estimated annual running costs were, at that time, £6 million per year. In 2024, they have risen to somewhere between £6.5 million and £8.5 million—and, indeed, they could go higher. Of course, we have still not considered the potential security costs ... Amendment 1 would restrict the funding to the original amount, which could be increased by substantial private donations. Might the Minister advise the House on the estimated private donations to date, and on what they are likely to be in future ...

Security will become a huge issue in the future—we are already acutely aware of it, given the circumstances of what is going on in Gaza. I appreciate that some thought was given to security during the planning process, and would be again, but circumstances have completely changed. If the project goes ahead and we build the memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, we do not want to see them being closed most of the time because of security considerations. ...

Nickie Aiken (Conservative): ... We have already seen the current Holocaust memorial that is based in Hyde Park covered up by the authorities to protect it during a recent pro-Palestine march that went through Hyde Park.

John Stevenson: ... Security issues should be one of our key considerations ... which is why I think somewhere like the Imperial War Museum would be a far better location.

col 942 **Andrew Percy (Conservative):** ... I think it is all the wrong way round to make a decision about where to place a memorial to 6 million murdered people because some protesters and activists might threaten it. That is giving in to bad behaviour.

John Stevenson: ... My new clause 1 asks the Government to get a security review and bring it to Parliament. ...

Nickie Aiken: ... no proper consultation or assessment took place of the merits of Victoria Tower Gardens as a proposed location; there is no grip on the costs to build it or to maintain it once completed, specifically the cost to the public purse of the ongoing security that will be required; and no thought has been given to security plans for protecting the park, its visitors, or the children's playground at a time of heightened national security risk. ...

col 943 I wish to reiterate my long-held view that this is the right memorial but the wrong location. I say that as a huge supporter of the Jewish community not only in my constituency but across the nation. I have friends who would not be here if their families had not escaped eastern Europe during the 1930s and '40s. ...

Having read last summer the outstanding book by Lord Finkelstein, "Hitler, Stalin, Mum and Dad"—I recommend everybody read that brilliant book—I concluded that we really do need a Holocaust memorial in this country to remind ourselves of past events but also to pay homage to the many British Jews still affected by the Holocaust and who lost so many

of their families. This is not about being anti the brilliant idea of a Holocaust memorial, but about its location only.

The Select Committee report concluded that no public consultation was undertaken regarding possible locations for the memorial. In fact, Victoria Tower Gardens came about as the idea of an unnamed individual. We cannot permit such a precedent to stand ...

When the Holocaust memorial was first mooted, it was suggested ... that the Imperial War Museum, less than a mile from Parliament, would be an appropriate location. I have visited the Imperial War Museum, including its outstanding Holocaust galleries and exhibitions, numerous times and I believe tourists, school groups and others would sincerely benefit from being able, having visited the galleries, to then spend time in a garden of the Imperial War Museum, which I believe would make an appropriate location for the Holocaust memorial.

I remember the first time I visited the Holocaust galleries: I came out after what was a very harrowing experience—a real human harrowing experience—and felt I wanted to sit down and reflect on what I had seen. I absolutely think that having the Holocaust memorial in the Imperial War Museum gardens would be appropriate, because after visitors see the exhibits in the museum they need time to reflect and remember those who have been lost. ...

col 944 We should also hear the voices of those who have been directly impacted by the atrocities of the Holocaust that took place across eastern Europe during the 1930s and '40s, and the subsequent genocides across the world that we have witnessed since then. Indeed, the Select Committee heard from Holocaust survivors who expressed objections to Victoria Tower Gardens as the chosen location. ...

col 945 The special report from the Select Committee makes it clear that local people are concerned about the environmental impact, and I have therefore tabled amendment 2, which is designed to reduce the damage to Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

Lia Nici (Conservative):... I was on the Select Committee, and what came to light, as she knows, was that residents and a significant number of petitioners from the Jewish community, including some Holocaust survivors, were against this location. ...

col 946 **Nickie Aiken:** ... Amendment 2, which stands in my name, seeks to limit the damage to the park to just the memorial, should the proposal go ahead. The Bill in its current form does not provide for the location of the memorial and the learning centre to be on the same site, and it was not stipulated as a prerequisite in the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission report in 2015. ...

col 947 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare):** ... This does not set a precedent for the release of other designated open or leisure green space in London—if it did, I would not be advocating for it. Any proposal needs to be adjudged on its merits. It does not create a Trojan horse. It does not open a Pandora's box. ...

Peter Bottomley: It may be too late for a manuscript amendment to the Bill to be accepted ... but would it be possible for the Minister to offer the House an assurance that when the Bill gets to another place, assuming it does, the Government will move an amendment to make plain what he said here?

col 948 **Nickie Aiken:** ... Amendment 3 is designed to ensure that any development of the holocaust memorial and learning centre does not exceed the current proposal of 1,429 square metres. In its current form, the Bill removes obstructions to any Holocaust memorial and learning centre being built in Victoria Tower Gardens, rather than a specific proposed memorial and learning centre. Indeed, one of the Select Committee's concerns was that without being attached to a specific plan, lifting the obstructions would risk providing a blank cheque for the memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens to take a radically different shape than has been anticipated. ...

col 949 I was shocked to learn from a ministerial statement that in the last 12 months the

costs had increased from £102 million—double the original figure—to £137 million, and that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had recently recommended a provision for a further £58 million in contingency costs, which brings us to a cost of £191 million today. ... I must ask whether we are really getting value for money when we are spending hundreds of millions on a memorial and learning centre rather than spending it on educating young people properly about the horrors of the Holocaust. ...

I note that Lord Carlile, the former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, has expressed his own concern that the site proposed for the memorial and learning centre presents a very real terrorism risk.

It would be unfortunate if, due to increased security concerns, the authorities insisted that the area around the memorial and learning centre should be surrounded by railings and gates, cutting off a wide part of the park from the public, which would be contrary to the idea of Victoria Tower Gardens as a public green space that is accessible for all. ... Let us recall that the Holocaust memorial located in Hyde park, which I mentioned earlier, was covered up for its own safety during a pro-Palestinian march only a few weeks ago. If the authorities were so concerned about the safety of that Holocaust memorial, surely they would be equally, if not more, concerned about having a major memorial adjacent to the Houses of Parliament.

col 950 I absolutely agree that we need a memorial to the Holocaust, but as the Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee clearly concluded in its report, and as reflected in the amendments tabled ... it is clear that there is more work to be undertaken by the Government on consultation, the consideration of alternative locations, costs and security before the House can have confidence that this Bill can be supported.

Rachel Maclean (Conservative): ... the impetus for a memorial at this time, and in this place, has never been greater following the 7 October attack, which was the largest pogrom against Jews since the Holocaust. ...

... these issues will outlive us and our time in this place. People may wonder why I speak about the Holocaust, and they may say, “You are not Jewish, and you do not have a large Jewish community in Redditch,” but even if there is only one Jewish person in my constituency, I should speak up in support of the things that matter most to them at this time.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities gave an excellent, first-rate speech at a Jewish community centre in north London. He spoke about some things that should shame us all. He spoke about the fact that it is now, in 2024, an arrestable offence for people to be “openly Jewish” near pro-Palestinian marches on the streets of London. He reminded us that there is only one group of people—the Jews—who are told that they are not tolerated in this country, and he said that growing antisemitism “is a mark of a society turning to darkness and in on itself... It is a parallel law that those countries in which the Jewish community has felt most safe” are countries where freedom and freedom of speech prosper, and the memorial is a vital part of bolstering Jewish people’s freedom of speech and their freedom to live in our country. Let us not forget that British Jews who have lived all their lives in our country are the only group who are routinely held up to blame for the actions of foreign Governments.

col 951 We are all desperately concerned, of course, about the position of innocent Palestinians caught up in the conflict, and we all wish to see the humanitarian relief and a lasting and safe peace in the middle east ... but it should not be necessary to make those points and those caveats over and over again when speaking about the position of British Jews.

To do anything else except place the responsibility for this terrible conflict squarely where it belongs, on the shoulders of Hamas—who could even now put down their weapons, release the hostages and stop the bloodshed and starvation of their own people—would be simply playing into the hands of a murderous terrorist organisation that does not respect the right of Israel to exist. It is dedicated only to the elimination of all Jews and the state of

Israel from the planet, just as the Nazis were dedicated to those same goals.

I speak as a practising Christian in support of other people of faith and tradition. I speak about the vital importance of continuing to stand up for the freedom of a group of people to live their lives in this country without fear of being persecuted for the actions of a foreign Government. I speak as someone who is appalled and deeply concerned by the rise in Holocaust denial ...

I believe that this Holocaust memorial should be placed in Westminster, next to our Parliament ... That is because this is where we debate foreign and domestic policy. ... the safety of the Jewish community is the canary in the mine, so let us build this lasting memorial with the education centre next to our Parliament, to focus on the existential threat to our Jewish brothers and sisters.

col 952 **Bob Blackman (Conservative):** ... I rise to support the Bill in its entirety and against the amendments, which I think will only delay through prevarication getting the Bill on to the statute books. ... I think there is universal agreement that there is a need for a Holocaust memorial and that there should be a learning centre as well. It appears to me that the debate today has centred around where this should be located, what conditions should be imposed and the funding for it, which is the subject of the amendments.

We in this country are deeply involved in Holocaust education. It is a requirement on our schools to ensure that young people learn about the horrors of the Holocaust and where the ultimate destiny of antisemitism leads. But the reality is that the survivors of the Holocaust are getting frailer by the day and the Holocaust is fading into distant memory, so it is vital that we capture those survivors' testimony and ensure they have had the opportunity to speak to as many people as possible before they unfortunately pass on. It is therefore vital that we have a permanent national institution to preserve the collective memory of the Holocaust. We have to understand the history, what went on and why the Holocaust happened. It is very difficult to contextualise the systematic murder of 6 million people because they were Jewish. It is tough to impart that. ...

Although we were not occupied by the Nazis, we were part and parcel of defeating them. Tens of thousands of Jewish refugees came to this country to make it their home and, of course, our troops liberated Bergen-Belsen and discovered at first hand the horrors of what had happened to the Jewish population, but that saved countless lives.

There are concerns, of course, about Britain's role. We should remember that children were almost orphaned by the end of the war and their parents were denied entry to the United Kingdom. Our role is not always to say how wonderful we are, and some of the decisions taken at that time need to be explored. Why, for example, were the train tracks into Auschwitz-Birkenau not bombed? We had the ability to bomb them to prevent many people from being transported. In the Channel Islands, British police officers actually carried out German policies. We have to recognise this and face up to it, and the learning centre will give us that opportunity.

There are obviously concerns about the site's location. I take a strong view that it needs to be alongside the principal democratic institutions of our time, namely, the Houses of Parliament. ...

col 953 There is cross-party support. ...

Planning permission for the memorial and learning centre was granted in 2021, but the High Court ruled in April 2022 that certain sections of the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900 were an obstacle to construction and therefore quashed the decision to grant planning consent.

This Bill is specific in dealing with the restrictions to the siting of the memorial and learning centre. Importantly, it does not grant planning permission, which will still have to go through the normal process. ...

The proposals for the memorial include sensitive landscaping that will improve Victoria Tower Gardens for every user, and more than 90% of the area of the current gardens will remain fully open after the memorial is built. ...

col 954 The construction phase of the UK Holocaust memorial and learning centre is expected to last around three years. The project team aims to make phased closures and reopenings of different sections of the park to ensure that as much of the park as possible is available for all users while the work carries on to produce this important memorial. The learning centre will include a powerful exhibition that will provide context for the memorial and encourage reflection on the relevance of the Holocaust for Britain today.

Edward Leigh (Conservative): From visiting really serious Holocaust museums, as I have done in Washington and Berlin, I know that they are vast spaces. This is a story that takes a huge amount of time and space to explain. The trouble is that the proposed learning centre is really a tiny space, and it simply will not do justice to the horror of what we are talking about.

Bob Blackman: ... Personally, I found the original Yad Vashem even more intimate and poignant than the current Yad Vashem. ... I think this centre will be appropriate for what we are seeking to achieve.

One aspect that has been discussed is security. The learning centre will obviously have entry security arrangements similar to other public buildings in Westminster. ...

Some suggestions have been made about the Imperial War Museum. To my knowledge, the Imperial War Museum supports the memorial being situated in Victoria Tower Gardens and has no wish for the memorial to be built in its grounds. ...

On the issue of antisemitism, I do not think anyone would claim this memorial will be the answer to solving more than 2,000 years of antisemitism. However, it will be a reminder to those in the Houses of Parliament of the potential to abuse democratic institutions to murderous consequences, in stark contrast to the true role of democracy in standing up and combating racism, hatred and prejudice wherever it is found.

Some hon. Members have suggested that certain members of the Jewish community do not support the proposed site. As everyone knows, the Jewish community is not a homogeneous group and there will be multiple differences of opinions, as within any community. Supporters of having the memorial on this site include the Chief Rabbi, the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the chair of the Jewish Leadership Council and chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, to name but a few, plus many Holocaust survivors. The funds assigned to the project are for a Holocaust memorial. The funds have not been diverted from educational budgets and there is no reason to think that abandoning the memorial would mean funds being reassigned to any other project. ... The memorial will set the Holocaust within a context that includes the history of antisemitism, including in Britain, and of subsequent genocides.

There have been multiple consultations with members of the Jewish and survivor communities. At every stage of the planning inquiry, individuals and groups have been able to give written and oral evidence. ...

col 956 Some people say there is no rush. The original proposal was made in 2015; we are now nine years on. Even if the Bill makes rapid progress and the development takes place, the memorial will take longer to develop than the extent of the Holocaust. We owe it to the survivors to get on with the job as quickly as possible. ...

Andrew Percy: ... I have absolute confidence that this memorial will be built. I was in the tent pavilion just a couple of weeks ago when representatives from the Government and the Opposition attended an event for Yom HaShoah. Both Front-Bench teams attended to confirm yet again, in front of Holocaust survivors and members of the community, that this memorial will be built and that it will be built next to Parliament. ...

col 957 Last night, I hosted an event here for Terraforming, a civil society group from Serbia. ... We held that event here in Parliament to showcase the story of Serbian Jewry and what happened to them during second world war ...

As we told the story of what happened to the Jews of Serbia, I was reminded of the visit that I made back in April on the 80th anniversary of the deportation of the Jews of Novi

Sad, in the part of Serbia that was occupied by the Hungarian fascist regime. Those Jews were herded into a synagogue on, I believe, 26 April, held there for two days without drink and food, and then shipped off, largely to Auschwitz, and murdered. That synagogue still stands, and we stood in it 80 years to the day on which the Jews of Novi Sad were rounded up and forced into it. Again, that reminded me of the value of having a place to memorialise and remember what happened. ...

I am probably the only person present who, when I had a proper job, which I now may well have to return to, taught the Holocaust curriculum to our young people as a history teacher. Such education is perhaps more important than ever, as living memory of the Holocaust fades. ...

col 958 As a history teacher, I would have very much valued having a place in the nation's capital to which we could have brought young people to not only tell them the story of the Holocaust and its horrors but then relate it to how this place, and the decisions that were taken here, played such an important role in ultimately demolishing the machinery of murder that led to the herding of human beings on to cattle trucks in the millions, their transportation to concentration camps, and then ultimately their murder in gas chambers. To have had a place to bring my students, next to this place, which is so important in the story of how the Nazi regime and the Holocaust were ended, would have been so valuable. Despite the brilliant work of organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust, we sadly cannot take all the young people in this country to Europe to see the concentration camps. That is not possible, but the ability to bring young people to somewhere central in this country where we can tell them about not only the experience and the horrors of the Holocaust but the very proud role that our democratic institutions played at that time is so important.

Why is this now more important than ever before? To answer that question, it is important to remember how the Holocaust started. It did not start with Auschwitz. That was the end. It did not start with gas chambers or with cattle trucks; it began with the demonisation of a people purely because of their racial and religious background. Its form, I am afraid to say, is familiar in what we see today. Jewish students were banned from university campuses, and we see Jewish students being questioned and being prevented from gaining access to university campuses across much of the west at the moment.

The Holocaust began with the demonisation of Jews. We see that now through the demonisation of the state of Israel, which is a cover for the demonisation of Jews. It began with boycotts, with people demanding an end to purchasing from Jewish companies and businesses, shop windows being smashed and synagogues being attacked. A synagogue in Toronto was smashed up this week for the second time. It began with attacks on Jewish community facilities, and we have seen that across the west at this moment in time.

This week I sat down with students from the Union of Jewish Students, who told me of the genuinely horrific experiences Jewish students are having on campuses in this country at this time, which have manifested in Jews being afraid to wear anything that marks them out as Jewish. I am proud to be a Reform Jew and I wear my kippah in synagogue, but since 7 October I have deliberately worn it on public transit in this country, to show my pride and my lack of fear. ...

col 959 However, the reason I have set out the comparison between what we had in the 1920s and 1930s and what we have today is that those parallels are genuinely frightening for Jews in this country at this moment in time. Of course, that precursor to the Holocaust involved the marching of people through streets in Europe, holding banners and signs singling out Jews for special treatment, demanding boycotts and othering the Jewish community, and that is exactly what we have seen in these past few months.

That leads me on to another argument that has been put in this debate about security. I made some reference to this when I intervened a little earlier, but the idea that we should not build this memorial and learning centre next to Parliament because of security concerns is something I have a real problem with. That is effectively saying to those people

who have sought since 7 October, and in many cases well before then, to demonise, frighten and scare Jewish people, that they have won. It is saying that we are so cowed as a people, as a nation and as a democracy by people who shout loudly and aggressively on the street that they get their way and we will put it somewhere else—we will stick it over in Lambeth. I do not think that is an appropriate or credible argument against putting this facility next to Parliament. ...

We have heard arguments about the Jewish community. Some people have prayed the Jewish community in aid as being against the proposal, but the Jewish community is not homogenous, so there will be very different views. It is worth reiterating again that ... Jewish leadership in this country, including the Chief Rabbi and those at the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Jewish Leadership Council, whom we in government and Parliament rely on and trust to be representatives of their communities, have been clear that they support the memorial at that site. ...

col 960 At the moment, we are seeing a record rise in Jew hate, in antisemitism, so it is more important than ever that the memorial and learning centre stands next to this place, which is the thin blue line—or red line, or whichever colour we want to call it—[Hon. Members: “Green line!”] It is the thin green line—and red line—between mob rule and democracy. ...

col 961 **Michael Ellis (Conservative):** ... I ... do not think it is in any way appropriate to say that security concerns—legitimate though they may be—are a good reason to countenance removing this important centre to another location. We must stand up against the thugs, the violence and the vandals. We in this House are a thin green line, and hopefully not that thin; hopefully, we represent the vast majority of people who defy those who would vandalise Holocaust memorials, and who hold in contempt those who would disgrace themselves and the freedoms, democracy and ancient history of this country by vandalising the memorial to the dead. Not only is that a wickedness and a blasphemy to those who have fallen, it is a type of fascism that is a disgrace to those who perform it, and we must stand up against it. We must say, “I’m not going to refuse to build a location of historic importance on a particular site because some criminals may choose to graffiti it. We defy you, and we stand up against you. We do not buckle to those security concerns.” We need a prominent memorial marking the Holocaust because, sadly, recent events have shown that we could see it happening again. It is not fanciful to say that such a thing could happen again. There are voices in this House who have heckled Members, including myself when I have spoken out against antisemitism, and there are voices outside who care about every nuance of other people’s rights—about microaggressions—but do not care about Jewish women and girls being brutally raped and savagely tortured while hostages in the pogrom of 7 October.

We have seen a refusal by respected authorities around the world to accept that Hamas are a terrorist organisation and that what they did on 7 October is unparalleled since the actual Holocaust of 1939 to 1945. In defying that truth, they show the world that it is not impossible that such an atrocity, or something like it, could occur again. That is why we need a memorial.

To those who ask, “Why does it have to be here?”, I say that it has to be here because this is the seat of our democracy. This is where our democracy’s fulcrum rests. This is the burning location of that democracy, where the fires of passionate argument have burnt almost since time immemorial, and Victoria Tower Gardens is part of this historic site. Of course one must be conscious of local residents, but one must also remember that this is to be a national memorial; it is of national importance. Protesters come here every week, in relation to myriad topics, because they know that this is where the action is; this is where democracy lies; this is where people meet to make decisions about the future. For that same reason, the memorial should be in a location that is centred where people will not forget it. ...

col 962 Feeling the need to cover up a memorial, or wishing to cover it up, is not a good

reason to place it elsewhere. The spreading of hate, the poison of sectarian hatred, the language of conflict and the vitriol of division may easily arouse the weak-minded, the ignorant and the mob—they always have done and always will do. There are the Twitter warriors, the anonymous, the fascist apologists. But the forces of light have always been stronger than the forces of darkness.

The Chief Rabbi, the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Holocaust Educational Trust, whose very job it is to educate the younger generations about the Holocaust, all support this project. That, I think, is telling. ...

The Jewish people in this country are a very small minority. There are many constituencies where there will be no Jews at all—literally none—and many others where there will perhaps be only a dozen or two. Jews represent only 0.3% of the population of this country, at around 250,000 people in a population of 70 million. In a world of 7 billion people, there are only 17 million Jews—a small but strong.

Jews love life and they seek peace. They are not an homogenous group; they do not all speak as one. One need only look at Israeli democratic politics for five minutes to see the divisions within Israeli society. They are not all going to agree about everything, just as all black people do not, or all redheaded people. They are not an homogenous group, but they love this country, they are respectful to it and grateful for it, and many seek to serve it, as I have tried to do, and I hope that long continues. ...

col 963 We need this memorial. Jews are not cowering with trembling knees, although maybe that happened in previous generations. They stand in the face of adversity, knowing that in this country there are many more of the Christian faith, the Hindu faith, the Sikh faith, the Buddhist faith and the Muslim faith who will stand with us and protect us, and who will stop those who seek to harm and intimidate the Jewish community. We need a memorial to remind people of that. It needs to be in this location because of its paramount and historic importance, and to remind people why, indeed, the state of Israel has to exist. To those who have an unnatural and unforgiving animus towards the Jews and who disguise it as hatred towards Israel and in other ways, I say that they are just twigs cracking in an empty forest, or birds chirping on a desert island, because their voices will be weak and ineffectual if those of us in this House speak as one. Those tiny voices and cracking noises in the wilderness will be drowned out in a crowd of millions. This memorial is needed and must continue.

col 964 Philip Dunne (Conservative): ... I will stray just a little off the immediate point of the amendments to read briefly from an article that I wrote nine and a half years ago ...

“As the deadliest concentration camp under the Third Reich, the name Auschwitz is synonymous with the Holocaust. One in six Jews who died were killed at the camp, approximately one million people. But even for those who survived, the scars of their incarceration, both physical and mental, would remain for the rest of their lives. Few who did survive are still with us, but their stories are as important now as ever.

A few years ago I visited Auschwitz with students from Bridgnorth, and it is an experience that will remain with me for the rest of my life. The site is a haunting remnant of a regime’s attempt to wipe an entire people from the face of the earth. The sheer number of those who lost their lives in concentration camps across Europe is almost incomprehensible. But the large piles of personal effects, like spectacles or shoes, taken from those walking to their deaths really brought home to me just how many were killed. The collection of children’s toys was particularly heartrending.

That man is capable of such inhumanity, based on an adherence to a doctrine of hate, is a chilling thought. But to shy away from retelling one of the darkest periods of human history would be an injustice to those who lost their lives. Instead, it is essential we continue to educate the next generation so they are aware of what happened under the Nazi regime, and develop a more tolerant society free from racism, prejudice and bigotry.” The need for such a memorial in the UK is no less now, as we see increased reports of antisemitism, for reasons that we can all understand. ...

col 965 Edward Leigh: ... we could have sorted this out eight years ago by having a fantastic memorial in the gardens of a similar size to the slavery memorial ... I have never been in favour of the underground learning centre. Because this is such a vital issue and we have a duty to the Jewish community, the local community and everyone else, we must proceed by consensus. We should not cause divisions on this. ...

The Jewish community is not homogeneous, but it is concerned. In a 2018 letter to *The Times* signed by eight Jewish peers, they expressed deep reservations about the project as it is currently proposed, and they knew what they were talking about. ...

col 966 We want as many people as possible, especially schoolchildren and young people, to visit the national Holocaust memorial. Existing pressures on Millbank will only be compounded by traffic seeking to access it. ...

The most impactful Holocaust memorials in the world, such as those in Washington, Berlin and Israel, all of which are visited, are enormous. They take up a space far bigger than this Chamber, on many levels. ... we have to tell the story bit by bit. You move from room to room, and you understand how hate built up. We need to have a proper museum, a proper Holocaust memorial, similar to those in Berlin and Washington where the whole story can be told. I do not think that this small underground learning centre will in any way address that point. ...

col 967 Kirsten Oswald (SNP): ... As is clear from the Bill's "Extent, commencement and short title", it is an England and Wales Bill, which is why some people might not have expected to see me rise to speak. It concerns a planning matter that relates to a different country, from my perspective, so I will not comment on the details of, for instance, the planning and location issues ... What I will say is that I am here today only because I think it profoundly important for us to see concrete proposals that can be implemented as soon as possible to deliver a Holocaust memorial and learning centre. We cannot lose sight of that, and it should not be lost among the—admittedly also important—details. ...

col 968 Some people may say that it would not be appropriate to rush in, and of course that is true, but I do not think anyone could reasonably accuse this project of having been dealt with in a rush. Let me say, as a Scottish MP who has no jurisdiction in this geographical area, that this is a really important matter, so by all means let there be further consideration, but can we just get on with it? ...

Matthew Pennycook (Labour): ... let me restate the Opposition's support for the construction of a national Holocaust memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens.

Given that this simple three-clause Bill does nothing more than remove pre-existing legislative impediments to the siting of such a memorial and centre in that location and make provision for, and in connection with, expenditure related to its establishment, we have not felt the need to table any amendments to it today. We sincerely hope—not least in view of the amount of time that has now passed since the idea was first proposed in 2015—that the Bill completes its remaining stages and receives Royal Assent as speedily as possible, so that the necessary planning application can be considered. ...

Let me be clear: we believe that there are valid criticisms to be made about the adequacy of historical consultation. The Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee is right to highlight that a full consultation at the site selection stage would have not only lent more legitimacy to the final site decision, but identified the constraint that clause 2 seeks to remove much earlier, thereby potentially avoiding much of the delay that has occurred as a result of its late identification ...

col 969 That said, we do not believe it would be appropriate to amend the Bill—which, as the House knows, does not mandate the use of any particular location—with a view to using it as a means of reconsidering the location determined by the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation and confirmed by the Government in 2016. Hon. Members from across the House may disagree with the decision, but Victoria Tower Gardens was identified as the preferred location eight years ago. That decision has been the subject of

considerable scrutiny through the planning process and, in our view, any attempt to reopen it risks significant further delay to the construction of the memorial. That would be unacceptable.

The Bill itself will obviously not authorise the construction of the memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens; such authorisation must come via the planning process. It is through the submission of a new planning application to Westminster City Council—it is my understanding that it must be a new permission, given the various policy changes that have happened in the five years since the initial application was submitted—that the appropriateness of the preferred site for the scheme will be tested again, and the arguments for and against any development revisited. In the event that the new application were to be called in by the Secretary of State for a decision, the Planning Inspectorate would have to undertake another public inquiry to consider all representations of support or opposition, as well as the relevant local plan, Government policy and guidance, and any other matters that it judges to be material to the case, in order to make a recommendation. We do not believe that this Bill should be used to reopen the final site decision and hinder the ability of the promoter to submit a new planning application to Westminster City Council for consideration ...

The planning process will necessarily have to consider security arrangements. The Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee's report was right to raise site security as a concern, and there is no question but that security measures need to be re-examined in the light of how the threat picture has changed since the previous planning application was considered five years ago. However, we do not believe that new clause 1, which stands in the name of the hon. Member for Carlisle, is either appropriate or necessary. ...

col 970 While the Opposition would not support the imposition of expenditure caps as proposed by amendment 1, it is clear to us that the Government need to do more to ensure that the project will deliver value for money and to provide appropriate assurances in that regard, in respect of both capital and recurrent costs. ...

col 971 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare):** ... We have been discussing how, we have been discussing where and we have been discussing when, but the House has never been discussing why. ... the why is clear and demonstrable. That is a sad fact, but it is. ...

Education is key to this proposal, to make sure that subsequent generations do not repeat the past. ... that is why the symbolic juxtaposition of the memorial and learning centre and this place is so important. There is an emotional and romantic intertwining of Parliament, freedom and democracy, and how dimmed those lights were during the period of the Holocaust.

col 972 Many have rightly mentioned security, which is a key issue. ... it would not be sensible or prudent to put into the public domain either the security assessment or, indeed, the remedies for what it throws up. It is slightly analogous to having a burglar alarm installed in one's home and posting the deactivation code on social media ...

The overriding point is that the argument that we cannot have the memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens because of security fundamentally undermines a key tenet that supports the proposition. Given the issues surrounding both the Holocaust and the fairly fluid and dynamic situation in the middle east, security will always be an issue for such an institution. Security would be an issue were it to be located at the Imperial War Museum, in the middle of Hyde Park or on the third floor of Harrods. Security will always be an issue ...

If security concerns, a fear of the mob and a fear of those who seek to disrupt and intimidate suddenly become the trump card that is used to determine where and how we locate such a facility, the mob will have won and we might as well all pack up and go home now, raising the white flag. ...

col 973 I would like to correct one or two things. There was a review of alternative sites, and the comparisons were published. The Imperial War Museum was included in that

analysis process. The square footage of the development represents just 7.58% of the overall surface area of the park; the park is 18,848 square metres, while the development is 1,492 square metres, which includes the memorial. ...

col 974 Setting aside the relevant section of the 1900 Act is necessary to bring forward, in land use and planning terms, the proposal that will eventually be before us. It does not—let me say that again, it does not—establish a precedent for any public body or Government Department, nor does it create a precedent that can be relied upon in law, at judicial review or elsewhere, for private sector developers or joint venture partners with the public sector to base their argument on the proposal. ...

Many questions have been raised around costs, which are not necessarily an issue for this Bill per se. ... costs will go up still further the longer that we delay. ...

col 975 ... we want to commemorate and memorialise a horrible period in our world history, and ensure that education can be provided so that the mistakes of the past are hopefully not repeated in the future. I do not make this point to be flippant, but what cost can be put on that, given the scale and the seriousness of the task that we have in front of us? ...

col 976 Different people will be moved and touched by what they see, hear and read in very different ways. There is a wonderful and compellingly attractive synergy to having the education centre and the memorial juxtaposed. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole made the point that having the memorial adjacent to Parliament, making that linkage to democracy, is key. Having it in a space where there are trees and plants, and the river close by, so that people can come out of the education facility, see the memorial, and have time to pause, reflect, consider, pray, or just hold hands, hug or whatever people may want to do to express solidarity with each other, is also key. ...

... before coming to this place, I heard in my professional life—I have also heard this in my political life, as I am sure many of us have—“Do you know what, I think this is a fantastic idea. Gosh, I think it’s good, and I know an absolutely marvellous site, two and a half miles away from where you want to develop it. It would be so much better there. My goodness me, it would stand out absolutely beautifully, but don’t do it here. Don’t do it in my backyard.” ...

col 977 ... I draw my remarks to a close by urging right hon. and hon. colleagues to oppose the amendments, to move this important proposal through, to provide a suitable memorial and education centre, not to give way to the mob, and to stand up for the very best of what it means to be a British democrat.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 2 and 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill, not amended in the Committee, considered.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/3C6046EB-8967-4852-8889-4886B4DEF2ED/HolocaustMemorialBill>

The amendments referred to above can be read at

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

The Select Committee report, referred to above, can be read at

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

The Ministerial Statement referred to above by Nickie Aiken can be read at

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

The Secretary of State’s speech about antisemitism, referred to above by Rachel Maclean, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/secretary-of-states-speech-on-anti-semitism>

The letter to the Times referred to above by Edward Leigh can be read at

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/has-the-time-come-for-a-british-macron-jhpwq6szr>

House of Commons Third Reading Debate

Committee Stage: Holocaust Memorial Bill

col 980 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare):** ... [Thanks to a long list of people who have supported the Bill] I also thank those who gave of their time in preparing their case. Those opposed to the proposal, either in whole or in part, gave of their time to appear before the Committee, and in so doing they exercised the right to be heard without fear or favour and to be cross-examined fairly by elected democrats in this place. That is actually what all of this is about: the triumph of good over evil; of light over darkness.

The challenge, real as it was, that the cloud of Nazism cast over the continent of Europe, and that the horror the Nazis unleashed against people merely because of their faith and belief, came so close to extinguishing those precious lights of religious freedom and democratic institutions, as well as freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of thought.

The Holocaust memorial will stand as a testimony to that; a visible beacon to specific visitors as well as to casual passers-by. It will provide a time to pause and reflect, and to redouble our efforts and make again the solemn and precious vow: "Never again."

Those who make a visit to the education centre—hopefully many of our young, but not exclusively our young—will come away with a renewed determination to learn from the horrors of the past, to understand in some clearer detail the depths that humankind can plummet against members of its own species, to make again that eternal vow of never again, and to learn from the mistakes of the past. The synergy of the education centre and the memorial, juxtaposed to each other and adjacent to this sovereign democratic Parliament, is so important, as is the setting in a busy part of the city of Westminster, with bustling traffic, pedestrians and ... families and children enjoying the open space provided in central London that is Victoria Tower Gardens.

col 981 What could be more uplifting than the laughter of children at play? What could be a happier sight than families enjoying leisure time together? We will reflect, when we think of those scenes, of the families ripped apart by the Holocaust, of the children torn from their parents, and the husbands separated from wives, to go into a cattle truck of darkness, not knowing where one was going, why one was going or what in the name of all that is holy was happening, merely because of a sign of faith and a belief in Yahweh. I hope that all those who visit will, as they see children at play and happy families, think of how many families were destroyed.

The imperative to deliver this memorial remains ever pressing. Those who either were part of the Kindertransport—I think of Lord Dubs and others—or are of the generation who have contemporary memory, even from a very young age, are ageing and dying. It is so important, even with a small and dwindling cohort of the real-time survivors, that they can draw spiritual comfort from the fact that we do not forget, that we do remember and that we do recommit not to repeat. ...

We acknowledge the concerns of those who think there is a better site and those who are concerned about the size of Victoria Tower Gardens, the impact the development may have on its character, or the precedent the Bill may create. I hope that I addressed those points as best I could in Committee, cognisant of the fact ... that while many of the concerns were totally legitimate, they were germane to the planning process, not the progress of the Bill. ...

col 982 For absolute certainty, I echo the point made so ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy): the day must not come when the decisions of where and how we site our memorials is dictated to, the whip hand is given and the fiat is acknowledged from a group of unaccountable people who believe that those who shout loudest, waive the most banners, cause the most disruption and generate the most vandalism will prevail, because the state has neither the nerve nor the spine to stand up

to them to say what we think is right, that we cherish it and that we will support it with all that we can. I make that commitment to the House and to the country today.

We will not be, nor should we be, dictated to by those who are fundamentally anti-democratic, who will not take no for an answer and will accept only victory and never defeat. We say to them, "Not here, not now, not ever." To give ground on that would fundamentally change this place and our democratic functions. ...

I think that we have lost sight of the fact that the proposals were considered at a detailed and independent planning inquiry. Set against the thorough work of the Committee and the time that has elapsed since 2015 when the proposal was first given voice, that fundamentally undermines the accusation of railroading by Government. ...

Let me say again, on Third Reading, that the Bill deals with a very narrow point in the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900. That was the only issue that was found to be an obstacle to construction in Victoria Tower Gardens. Let me say again for the convenience of the House and for the certainty of those outside, the Bill creates no precedent in its alleviation of the clause within that Act. It sets no precedent elsewhere in Victoria Tower Gardens, or elsewhere.

col 983 We regret to recall that antisemitism is at record levels. The devastatingly clear speech delivered by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), just yesterday put that into very clear view. A great grandson of the survivor Lily Ebert has said: "When we no longer have survivors like Lily among us, this memorial will help to ensure that their experiences are never forgotten. We can create the next generation of witnesses."

We must do that to ensure that the pernicious weed of antisemitism can be grubbed up and that the stain that it is on some sections of society is removed. ...

Matthew Pennycook (Labour): ... Whatever differences might exist about precisely how we do so, we are united as a House in our commitment to remembering and learning from the Holocaust. It is imperative that we continue to educate future generations about what happened, both as a mark of respect to those who were murdered and those who survived, and also as a warning about what happens when antisemitism, prejudice and hatred are allowed to flourish unchecked. A national memorial for remembrance of the Holocaust will stand as a permanent reminder of the horrors of the past, and the need for a democratic citizenry to remain ever vigilant and willing to act when the values that underpin a free and tolerant society are undermined or threatened, as well as encouraging reflection on the implications of those horrors for British government and society.

As was rightly mentioned by several hon. Members in Committee, in the nine years since the idea was first mooted, the case for such a monument and institution has become acute. Not only does anti-Jewish hatred continue to grow, but the remaining survivors of the Holocaust become ever fewer and ever frailer. We owe it to those who remain with us, and to future generations, to complete this vitally important project. ...

col 984 **Peter Bottomley (Conservative):** ... Those who think there should be a memorial do not necessarily think the learning centre should be with it, while those who think there should be a learning centre do not think it should be squashed into what I described as a box under a memorial. There are many who think that the memorial could be better than the design that was not chosen in Ottawa, and I think it is a continuing embarrassment to the Government that the name of the person who was mentioned 13 times in the announcement of the winning design, Sir David Adjaye, is one that Ministers cannot say today. ...

col 985 The idea that a particular memorial will stop it happening would be laughed at by those who are commemorating and mourning the Yazidi genocide 10 years ago, the Rwandan genocide, and one or two others I could name in other parts of the world. ...

Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat): ... My mother's family were victims of the Nazi

regime's persecution. My uncle was imprisoned in Dachau in 1936, but got out with the help of Scandinavian friends. All my mother's half-brothers and sisters left Germany and, except for one, never returned. The persecution hung over my mother's childhood every day and was never forgotten for the rest of her life. I was born much later, but I have always had a sense of shame and horror about the atrocities committed by the German state during the Holocaust. I owe it to the millions of Jews who perished at the hands of the country in which I was born to convert this shame into political activity. I will always stand up and make sure that such unspeakable cruelty does not happen again.

The education I received in Germany made sure that I never forgot the part that my birth country played in the suffering of millions. Although Britain has a different legacy, it remains important that future generations in this country are as just as informed and educated. One of the most significant lessons that we can learn is about ensuring that we identify the initial indicators of injustice. We must remember that the atrocities of the Holocaust began by creating communities of division and hatred. We must prevent the same prejudice from rearing its head today.

col 986 There is no place more suitable for the memorial than Victoria Tower Gardens. Having the memorial right at the heart of our democracy will serve as a constant reminder of the deadly consequences of fascism and racism. Members of Parliament and the public must be able to feel this history to ensure that the legacy of the Holocaust does not end up in the periphery of our minds. The rise in antisemitism in the UK is a reminder that we cannot be complacent when it comes to education on the world's oldest hatred. Holocaust denial is becoming more prolific, with conspiracies spread on social media, and we must confront this.

At a time when the Holocaust moves from living memory into history, it is more important than ever that we protect the facts of the Holocaust by creating a learning centre alongside the memorial. As Holocaust survivors become ever fewer and frailer, it is vital that progress is made rapidly. Work has not started, despite the memorial being promised eight years ago. Our beloved survivors are in their 80s and 90s, and will not be with us forever. We have to preserve their testimonies and the memories of their families for future generations. ...

Sadly, the building of the memorial and learning centre has been beset by delays. It is important to make sure that local voices are heard, but we politicians must always consider a balance of interests. If we sincerely believe in the importance of this project, we must get on with it now and not wait any longer.

Sir Ben Helfgott MBE, who passed away last year, will never be able visit the site. He had looked forward to taking his family to the memorial and education centre. As Sir Ben said before his passing, the memorial will "ensure that the memory of the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators are never forgotten, and that my story, and the story of my fellow survivors can continue to be told forever."

Steve Brine (Conservative): ... A couple of years ago, the then Prince of Wales came to Winchester to unveil the statue of Licoricia, a famous Jewish figure from Winchester, and her son Asher. It stands in Jewry Street in the heart of our city as a permanent reminder of what happened. To know it, and therefore to know the memorial we are discussing today, which I support, is to never forget. I was not intending to speak today, but I have been moved by some of the speeches that I have heard, including the last one, and I think that to have this memorial and this centre is to never forget. ...

col 987 ... I am tempted to say that this site is not perfect. But I also hear what the Minister says about the synergy of this memorial being adjacent to this amazing Palace of Westminster, and I think that that is the point. ...

Richard Graham (Conservative): Does my hon. Friend accept that there are some of us who feel absolutely as passionately as he and every other colleague in this House about

what happened in the Holocaust but who do not believe that this is necessarily the best place to site such a memorial? ...

Steve Brine: Yes. ...

There is another reason why I support it. I always think that in life you can never quote C. S. Lewis too often, and my favourite quote from C. S. Lewis is: "You can't go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the ending."

Clearly we cannot go back and change what happened, but we can change the ending and make sure that people remember where we have come from. ...

Kirsten Oswald (SNP): ... the principle of having this Holocaust memorial matters. The opportunity to visit the memorial and the importance of diverse voices in support and the broadest range of testimony being shared are relevant to us all.

col 988 It is fair to say that this place has taken its time to get where we are now. My overwhelming feeling is that as the 80th anniversary of the Holocaust is within sight, it is time to do this. It is time to get on with it. I appreciate that there are some differences on the location. I understand and sympathise with the various concerns and positions, but it seems to me that we can either keep going round in circles or agree that it is time to move forward. I favour the latter approach. We just need to do it. ...

I am in awe of the people, including survivors and their families, who work so hard to educate others. I want to mention my constituent Geraldine Shenkin, whose lovely mum, Marianne Grant, was held in no fewer than three concentration camps but none the less showed such courage. She made such striking and beautiful art, which will convey the horror of the Holocaust for generations to come. ...

I am also in awe of my constituent Steven Anson, whose father Martin Anson's story is told so powerfully through the Gathering the Voices initiative, and my late constituents Ingrid and Henry Wuga, both arrivals from the Kindertransport who made such an impact on my local community and across Scotland in their retirement as they dedicated themselves to speaking to our young people about their experiences. They changed countless lives. Their testimony, their telling the truth of the Holocaust, has impacted thousands of people. We lost Henry Wuga recently, shortly after his 100th birthday. It would be a great shame if the wisdom and dedication he demonstrated was not part of the new memorial and education centre, and I sincerely hope that his voice and the others I mentioned are among the many Scottish voices that this memorial would benefit from amplifying. ...

I know I am very lucky to have had these conversations, to have heard these stories ... But what about those who have not had that opportunity? What about those in future years who will need to know the reality of the Holocaust, but who will no longer have those brave survivors to hear from? Both the memorial and the education centre are vital in that regard.

col 989 We are also fortunate to have organisations and projects, including the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust led by the remarkable Olivia Marks-Woldman ... the Holocaust Educational Trust, where Karen Pollock works tirelessly. There is also Gathering the Voices and Vision Schools Scotland. I could go on about the ethos that shines through all their work. The new memorial and education centre will be in a position to deliver and learn from that great work. They will be able to contribute to each other's work, which is increasingly important in an increasingly polarised world ...

Bob Blackman (Conservative): In the short time available, we should remember that the Holocaust represents the darkest hour in human history, when 6 million Jewish people were systematically murdered by the Nazis. Above all else, the thing that impresses me about the survivors is their lack of bitterness. It would be very easy for them to be very bitter and very angry about what happened, but they give their thoughts and their education freely and without bitterness. That is the key point. As the survivors pass away, we must ensure that we capture their testimony so that it is always available.

I regret that, when I was at school, we had no education on the Holocaust. Our generation was largely ignorant. The Jewish population of this country largely did not want to talk

about what had happened for fear of not being believed. Education is vital. I thank the Minister and the successive Ministers who have taken this Bill through the House to enable us to have a learning centre and memorial. I also thank the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, the Holocaust Educational Trust and all those wonderful bodies that have agitated for this to happen, and who deliver education and learning every single day. ...

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/3C6046EB-8967-4852-8889-4886B4DEF2ED/HolocaustMemorialBill#contribution-E4855188-6736-46FD-9DD7-E307D131DBC9>

The Secretary of State's speech about antisemitism, referred to above by Simon Hoare, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/secretary-of-states-speech-on-anti-semitism>

TOP

Israel

See also the Commons Committee and Third Reading debates on the Holocaust Memorial Bill that are included in the Holocaust section above, and Lords oral answers "President of Iran: Death" and Commons written answer 26176 "Ghassan Abu-Sittah" that are included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Oral Answer

Prime Minister's Questions

Zarah Sultana (Labour): The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor is seeking arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity. This House does not aid and abet Hamas, but it does aid and abet Israel through the sale of arms, such as components for Israeli F-35s—known as the most lethal fighter jet on earth—which are raining down hell on Gaza. Will the Prime Minister uphold international law, drop the nonsense about the most robust licensing system in the world and end arms sales to Israel? If the ICC issues arrest warrants, will he comply by ensuring that those individuals are arrested if they enter the UK?

The Prime Minister: ... When it comes to the ICC, this is a deeply unhelpful development, which of course is still subject to a final decision. There is no moral equivalence between a democratically elected Government exercising their lawful right to self-defence and the actions of a terrorist group, and the actions of the ICC do absolutely nothing to get a pause in the fighting, or to get the hostages out or aid in.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/B8B92127-ED22-4926-882C-C661A624E691/Engagements#contribution-65DB264E-107A-4E38-9ABC-CAECCCAE5AC9>

House of Commons Written Answers

War Crimes: Gaza

Caroline Lucas 9Green) [26669] To ask the Attorney General, pursuant to the Answer of 16 May 2024 to Question 25822 on War Crimes: Gaza and with reference to paragraph 2.13 of the Ministerial Code, updated on 22 December 2022, if she will hold discussions

with the Prime Minister on the potential merits of using her authority to publish summaries of advice provided to him on alleged war crimes in Gaza since 1 April 2024.

Victoria Prentis: As per my previous answer to UIN 25822 tabled on Thursday 16 May, and as reflected in the Ministerial Code, I do not confirm publicly whether I or any other Law Officer has advised on a particular issue or the content of any advice, save where I, as a Law Officer, explicitly consent. That consent is rarely given.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-16/26669>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25822>

The Ministerial Code, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63a4628bd3bf7f37654767f2/Ministerial_Code.pdf

The following two questions both received the same answer

Israel: Disinformation

Jonathan Gullis (Conservative) [26292] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what support his Department is providing to partners in Israel to help tackle online disinformation campaigns.

Tom Hunt (Conservative) [26919] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help Israel tackle online disinformation campaigns backed by Iran.

Andrew Mitchell: The FCDO is not working through partners in Israel, but is working with partners across government directly to identify information manipulation, hold hostile actors to account for malign activity and increase access to factual information.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26292>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26919>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Matthew Pennycook (Labour) [26901] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent discussions he has had with his European counterparts on the potential recognition of a Palestinian state.

Matthew Pennycook (Labour) [26902] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs has had recent discussions with his counterparts in (a) Ireland, (b) Spain, (c) Norway, (d) Malta, and (e) Slovenia on joint recognition of the state of Palestine.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK supports a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian people. The Foreign Secretary has spoken with the new Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority Mohammad Mustafa and offered the UK's support as his government implements much-needed reforms. An effective PA is vital for lasting peace and progress towards a two-state solution.

Our long-standing position has been that we will recognise a Palestinian State at a time that is most conducive to the peace process.

We engage with European partners on all aspects of the current conflict and on building momentum towards a lasting peace.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26901>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26902>

Mohammad Mustafa Najem

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [26111] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he

plans to take steps in response to reports of alleged anti-Semitic language used by the Palestinian Authority Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments Mohammad Mustafa Najem in 2002.

Andrew Mitchell: We are aware of historic allegations of use of anti-semitic language. Antisemitism is abhorrent and has absolutely no place in our or any society, and we are committed to tackling it in all its forms.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26111>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Gaza: Hospitals

Steve Double (Conservative) [25865] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of recent reports of a weapons cache found by the Israel Defense Forces at the MRI centre at the al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza.

Steve Double (Conservative) [25866] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of recent reports of a weapons cache found by the Israel Defense Forces at the maternity ward at the al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Hamas is putting Palestinian civilians at grave risk by embedding themselves in the civilian population and civilian infrastructure. The UK is aware of reports of Hamas using healthcare facilities and other infrastructure, such as schools, as bases and command nodes.

All parties must act in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. All possible measures must be taken to ensure the safety of medical personnel and facilities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25865>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25866>

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

Emma Hardy (Labour) [25317] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent assessment has made of the adequacy of designated safe zones in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Ordinary civilians must be safe and able to access food, water and medical care. We have been 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.

We continue to press these points with our Israeli counterparts.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-08/25317>

Gaza: Casualties

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour) [26209] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) women and (b) children killed in Gaza since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war.

Andrew Mitchell: The situation in Gaza is desperate and too many civilians have been killed, including women and children. The fastest way to end the conflict is to secure a deal which gets the hostages out and allows for a pause in the fighting in Gaza. We must then work with our international partners to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26209>

Israel: Bedouin

Anum Qaisar (SNP) [26298] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the status of unrecognised villages in the (a)

Naqab and (b) Negev region of southern Israel.

Andrew Mitchell: We continue to monitor the issue of unresolved Bedouin land claims, and unrecognised Bedouin villages, in the Negev/Naqab region, and lack of basic services. We continue to encourage the Israeli authorities and Bedouin communities to engage in dialogue to agree a satisfactory solution to the issue, respecting the rights of the people affected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26298>

House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Israel and Gaza

The statement made in the Commons on 20 May was read in the Lords.

col 1088 ... Over seven months since the horrors of 7 October, there is no end to the current conflict in sight. ... We continue to believe that the fastest way to end the conflict is to secure a deal that gets the hostages out and allows for a pause in the fighting in Gaza. We would then have to work with our international partners to turn that pause into a sustainable permanent ceasefire.

Building momentum towards a lasting peace will require a number of elements, including removing Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel. ...

A deal with Hamas for a pause in the fighting would involve exchanging hundreds of Palestinian prisoners charged with serious acts of terrorism in return for the hostages' release. I do not underestimate how difficult that must be for the Israeli Government, but it is the best way forward that we see right now. ...

A deal as I have described offers the best prospects of reuniting more hostages with their families; the anguish for them is unbearable. ...

At the same time, the toll on civilians in Gaza continues to rise. Images from the Strip give us some sense of what they endure: civilians piling belongings on to a cart led by a donkey, or seeking to scrape together a meal in a makeshift shelter. We have seen appalling attacks on aid convoys and UN offices by Israeli extremists, and the tragic deaths of UN and other humanitarian personnel in Gaza. ...

col 1089 The Government of Israel have previously set out publicly their commitment to increase the flow of aid into Gaza significantly, but we need to see far more. ...

We remain absolutely committed to getting aid into Gaza to alleviate the suffering, and we are working with a wide variety of other Governments and aid agencies to deliver aid by land, sea and air. ...

As the fighting continues, we estimate that around 800,000 Palestinian civilians have fled from where they were seeking shelter in Rafah to other parts of the southern Strip. The extent of this displacement is why we have been clear that we would not support a major Israeli military operation in Rafah, unless there was a very clear plan for how to protect people and save lives. We have not seen that plan. ...

col 1090 After more than seven months of fighting, it is becoming difficult to imagine the realisation of a lasting peace, but Britain continues to try to build momentum towards that goal. That will require not only the release of all the hostages and an end to the current fighting, but the removal of Hamas's capacity to launch attacks against Israel; Hamas no longer being in charge in Gaza; the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza; and a political horizon for the Palestinians, providing a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution. That is what we continue to strive towards: peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. ...

Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour): ... My Lords, the focus of all politicians should be on achieving an immediate ceasefire to end the war in Gaza, free the hostages, alleviate the humanitarian crisis and create a pathway towards a lasting political solution. In March, the

Foreign Secretary said that we needed to work with our international partners to give hope to that process and to move towards recognising a Palestinian state, not wait for the end of the process. Can the Minister tell us what assessment the Foreign Secretary and the Government have made of the announcement today by Norway, Spain and Ireland recognising a Palestinian state? ...

As signatories to the Rome statute, the United Kingdom should support the independence of the ICC, which is a corner-stone of the international legal system. We must remember that the decision of the ICC chief prosecutor is only the start of the process. Therefore, we should wait for the decisions of the wider court, which will assess the information before it and decide whether to issue a warrant. It must be allowed to do so with independence. ... Does the noble Lord accept that, if the Rafah offensive goes ahead, we should join our American allies in suspending weapons or components that could be used in that offensive?

At the Business and Trade Select Committee this week, Andrew Mitchell confirmed that the assessment that no serious risk of a breach of international humanitarian law exists undertaken on 8 April only included evidence taken “up to the end of January”, so any actions the IDF may have taken over the last four months have not been taken into consideration. His department has said that it reviews its assessment of Israel’s actions on a rolling six-weekly basis, which means that a fresh assessment should have been published by Ministers on Tuesday. Can the Minister confirm whether a new assessment has taken place and when it would be announced?

col 1091 In that same Select Committee meeting, Andrew Mitchell also said: “You cannot use starvation as a weapon of war and remain within international humanitarian law: that is clear”.

Yesterday, I reminded the Foreign Secretary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2417, which condemns the use of starvation against civilians as a method of warfare. It also condemns “the unlawful denial of humanitarian access” and the act of “wilfully impeding relief supply”. The Foreign Secretary acknowledged that Israel has not had “a clean bill of health”.—[[Official Report, 21/5/24; col. 947.](#)] on allowing humanitarian aid to enter Gaza. Does the Minister accept the Foreign Secretary’s description of the Israeli action and, if so, does he believe such action to be in breach of Resolution 2417?

On Monday, the chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Alicia Kearns, welcomed “the effort on the maritime port”.—[[Official Report, Commons, 20/5/24; col. 648.](#)]

However, as we have heard, the United Nations has expressed deep concern about that and particularly stressed that land routes are the most viable, effective and efficient aid delivery method, which is why we need all crossing points to be opened. ...

Concern has also been expressed about the safety of aid workers. On 5 April, the Foreign Secretary called for an independent inquiry into Israel’s killing of seven aid workers, including three Britons. Israel did take some action against those responsible for the decisions made in those attacks. However, Andrew Mitchell said on Monday that “we are considering, with our allies, the best way to inject further independence into that investigation”.—[[Official Report, Commons, 20/5/24; col. 655.](#)] ...

Finally, I want to raise something else that we have considered in this Chamber, which is the increased violence against Palestinians living in the West Bank. They are facing increased attacks, clearly in breach of international humanitarian law. I have also raised the attacks on the UNRWA headquarters. Can the Minister tell us what steps he and his department are taking to boost accountability for settler violence?

col 1092 **Baroness Smith of Newnham (Liberal Democrat):** ... The first duty is surely for the Israeli Government and Hamas to come together and for Hamas to return the hostages. Like some other Members of your Lordships’ House, I have a small yellow lapel badge. Nobody has asked about it ... It basically calls for a return of the hostages. What are His Majesty’s Government doing to try to work further with the Israeli Government, and through other means, to get negotiations going again, to bring about a ceasefire and to

discuss an appropriate way of bringing back the hostages? ...

The Foreign Secretary ... has talked about recognition of Palestine “when the time is right”. ... three countries have today recognised Palestine. ... what is the British Government’s longer-term thinking about what a future settlement might look like?

Minister Mitchell in the other place was very clear that His Majesty’s Government cannot support an Israeli attack on Rafah without seeing a plan. ... Do His Majesty’s Government feel that they have any leverage? Yesterday, the Foreign Secretary ruled out a suspension of arms sales, pointing out that UK arms sales are very small in quantity compared with American sales of arms. But Germany is the second-largest exporter of arms to Israel—has it considered a suspension of arms sales? ...

I will finish with questions about one brief mention of the ICC, because we have now heard that the prosecutor has put forward his recommendations ... we are signatories to the Rome treaty. The problem is that Israel is not—nor is the United States. So what is the Government’s position on persuading Israel and the United States to take notice of the ICC? ...

col 1093 **The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):** ... bringing the war in Gaza to an end; ensuring that hostages are returned after ... being held for so long; and ending the suffering of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza ... remains the number one priority of the United Kingdom Government, together with our key partners. ...

We need to ensure that humanity prevails in all that we do. ...

col 1094 I would add that, when you see certain statements from Defence Minister Gallant and Minister Gantz recently, there is a real question that Israel needs to answer on whether the option of Palestinian governance is a real one—recognised not just by us in your Lordships’ House or by the United Kingdom Government, but within Israel and its Cabinet. ... We are pressing on the humanitarian issues that were raised and on the issue of getting the Erez crossing fully opened. ...

The issue of settlers was raised ... earlier this month, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions on extremist groups and individuals for inciting and perpetrating settler violence in the West Bank. We will not hesitate to take further actions in this regard. ...

We are very much seized of the two-state solution, and I come on to the point of recognition. ... Of course, we have noted what has been announced today by Norway, Ireland and Spain, and we are engaging with those countries ... We have said repeatedly, as the Foreign Secretary recently articulated, that Israel does not have a veto on Palestine coming into existence. We have also said that this is not something that should wait until the end of any given structured process for peace. ... But the first step must be ... bringing this current conflict in Gaza to an end for the sake of both Israelis and Palestinians, particularly the hostage families and those who are suffering in Gaza.

On the issue of IHL ... I was very clear when I appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee last week that the principle of law must prevail. ... We are not a state supplier of weapons to Israel and, equally, the processes that are undertaken are well tested. Of course, the issue of the World Central Kitchen workers forms a big part of the assessment process which is currently being undertaken. ...

col 1095 On starvation as a weapon of war, there is no way of holding back: of course, no one should use starvation as a weapon of war, and where it is seen, as I have said before, it brings serious questions. We rely on the strength of our relationship with Israel, which means that, as an ally and a friend, we continue to raise these issues, privately at times and quite directly. Equally, where we feel it necessary to take public action, we continue to do so.

The issue of the maritime port was raised. I pay tribute to those who worked to bring this into operation but, to be clear, what was delivered was a payload of only about

20 trucks. ... That is why we are focused on land routes, on the situation in Rafah, on Kerem Shalom, and on the crossing in Erez, to get more aid in. The Ashdod port is also key. ...

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): My Lords, will the Minister take the opportunity to clear up some of the misinformation that is being put out, not least, I am sorry to say, by the BBC? For example, there are already 142 states that recognise Palestine and it has not made a scrap of difference. Humanitarian aid is being sent in but it is not being distributed, or it is being stolen by Hamas and sold. Even the United Nations has now admitted that the casualty figures relating to women and children should be halved—we have been given false casualty figures. Finally, I am puzzled by the way that we put Israel under a microscope but no one has anything to say about the hundreds of thousands of people who have died recently in Congo, in Yemen, in Syria and all over the place, without any concern, it seems, for their humanitarian aid.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, on the noble Baroness's last point, I disagree with her. ... We are very much focused on that.

On the casualty figures, yes, the UN revised them because they are based on casualties that it is now finding. I fear, and I do not want to add to speculation, that we need to make a full assessment on the ground. I agree with the noble Baroness inasmuch as we need to have these figures established and verified. To do that, we need the UN agencies and we need the verification process to take place, because what is undoubtedly true is that much of Gaza is currently in ruins and we need to ensure that those souls who have been buried under that are given dignity. *col 1096* At the same time, I recognise that we hold Israel to a high standard because it is a democracy with a rule of law. We do not have the same standard for Hamas. It is a terrorist group. ...

On recognition ... stability, security and peace will be possible only once there is stability, security and peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat): The Statement refers to "a political horizon for the Palestinians, providing a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution". Is that not a mountain the top of which will never be reached? Why will the Government not do as the Foreign Affairs Select Committee does—of course, now Norway, Ireland and Spain are added to the 142 countries—and recognise the state of Palestine? ...

I am proud of the work done ... to bring about the ICC. Is it not important that we do not undermine its work?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I agree with the noble Baroness about the importance of international law and the role that the ICC has played. ... As the noble Lord, Lord Collins, articulated, it allows a pre-trial process to be followed and it is important that that process is now undertaken. ...

It is very clear that we continue to engage with Israel as a constructive partner. There are those in Israel who recognise the same credible, irreversible pathway to the two-state solution. ...

Baroness Altmann (Conservative): ... Israel has sought to live in peace with its neighbours. For the last few decades, it has offered a two-state solution and every time the Palestinians have rejected it. Israel has withdrawn from territory to make peace with Egypt and Jordan. It has given back Gaza unilaterally and withdrawn from the settlements. It is willing to do so in exchange for peace.

Meanwhile, we have recently seen the Palestinians using Gaza to attack Israel. The Hamas leaders of the Palestinians have hijacked the aid that is going in.

col 1097 They are making threats against America for building a pier to distribute aid. They have targeted and attacked the crossings, killing Israeli soldiers who were trying to facilitate the aid. Can my noble friend tell us what evidence there is of the Palestinians or their leaders actually wanting to live in peace with the State of Israel, or taking care to

avoid the deaths of their own civilians?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... To achieve peace, you need to have partners for peace. It is very clear that Hamas is not a partner for peace.

From engaging with people who have left Gaza, it is my opinion that Hamas has not done the Palestinians any favours. It is abundantly clear it has not put any security or protection in place for the people of Gaza. That is why we have been consistent that Hamas cannot be the governing authority in Gaza.

We also need to ensure that Israel comes to the diplomatic table. ... peace agreements have been signed with Jordan and Egypt, but there are further chapters in that process with Bahrain, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. There is talk of normalisation with the wider Gulf region. ... We also need the Palestinian Authority to mitigate the previous issues that have arisen with the Palestinian leadership, to ensure that there is an inclusive approach and that, when direct discussions begin, both parties are committed to the notion of peace, stability and security. ...

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Labour): My Lords, we all share the sense of outrage at the massacres on 7 October. Is it not now unrealistic to expect Hamas to give up the remaining hostages for a pause and not a ceasefire, knowing that giving up its main bargaining counter will open the door for Israel to seek to eliminate the remaining Hamas militants in Gaza itself? ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... I have met with the hostage families, and I assure the noble Lord that anyone who has done the same knows that they can never give up. Even if it is the 59th minute of the 11th hour, we should continue in that endeavour if it means that, with all our efforts, we get one more hostage out.

col 1098 **Baroness Stuart of Edgbaston (Crossbench):** ... It is my understanding that the [ICC] prosecutor usually declines to act where there is an independent and effective legal system in the state concerned that can address any legal charges. Are we really suggesting that that is not in place in Israel?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, we have previously talked about the strength of accountability and the justice systems in Israel. As I said earlier, the prosecutor has submitted his evidence and a process is now under way. What we also implore Israel to do—and which it has demonstrated on certain issues—is to show accountability; for example, by investigating the tragic events around the World Central Kitchen ...

Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, can the Minister confirm that the ICC seeks to prosecute individuals and not states ... What does he have to say, and what is the response of the British Government, to the comments made by the National Security Minister of Israel, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the day after the ICC's announcement? He said: "Only Israel will control Gaza ... Israel will occupy Gaza, completely & fully including Jewish settlement in" the "entire enclave", and he called for the "encouragement of voluntary migration' of Gazans".

He also stated that he wanted to live there in Gaza. Today, he stormed the al-Aqsa Mosque, in response to the declarations from Norway and Spain.

The Minister will know that Netanyahu's Government oppose a two-state solution; the ambassador to this country has said very clearly, on record on the radio and television, that her Government oppose a two-state solution. In the light of that, why are our Government—who are committed to a two-state solution, as are all parties in this House—giving so much comfort, and not showing more resistance, to those opposed to it? ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, ultimately, who governs Israel will be a matter for Israelis. ...

col 1099 The prevailing view of one Minister within the Israeli Government is not necessarily the view of other Ministers within that same Government. However, I agree with the noble Baroness that the current Government in Israel do not believe

in this two-state solution; it is a stated policy of the Prime Minister and the current Government. ...

Baroness Helic (Conservative): My Lords, I recognise His Majesty's Government's position to wait for the second report into allegations of UNRWA staff involvement on the 7 October terror attack before making a final decision on the new funding, once our current allocation has expired at the end of this month. UNRWA supports 3.7 million Palestinians, 2.3 million of whom live in Jordan, and hundreds of thousands of whom live in Syria and Lebanon. If there is no further commitment to aid, refugees who have nothing to do with 7 October or the situation in Gaza are going to suffer as a result. In order to avoid this scenario, will my noble friend consider exploring the option of restoring the funding for UNRWA's activities outside Gaza or outside the Occupied Palestinian Territories as an interim measure, pending the second report?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... our funding structures do not allow for that differentiation. We are waiting for the OIOS report—the oversight report—which is due this month, because it is specific to the abhorrent events of 7 October. However, this has not stopped us extending humanitarian support into Gaza, which is now well over £100 million. ...

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green): ... My Lords, in oral evidence yesterday to the Business and Trade Committee on UK arms exports to Israel, two Ministers, Andrew Mitchell and Alan Mak, confirmed that there is data available only for the first two quarters of 2023, and that the data for the following two quarters of the year is overdue ... Whatever the volume, surely what is being sold is not a determinant of the UK's legal position on arms exports to Israel. ...

col 1100 **Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** On all these assessments, as I have said before, there is a process. ... On the issue of the principle of law, I agree with the noble Baroness that the principle should be directly applied.

Lord Turnberg (Labour): My Lords, no one can view what is going on in Gaza with any equanimity; it is truly horrendous, and Israel is coming in for a lot of criticism for what is happening there. But one has to look at this with some form of balance and look at who may be responsible for the majority of the problems. Hamas was responsible for the original horrendous acts, and its terrorists are preventing its own people sheltering in its caves. It is purloining the aid that is getting in and selling it on at a high price to its population, which is very cynical. It is also cynically sending rockets to the crossing at two places, closing them temporarily. So Hamas must bear some of the responsibility, and I am afraid that UNRWA is not entirely blameless either. ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I certainly agree with the noble Lord on the role that Hamas has played. As I said earlier, I think that many in Gaza recognise the devastation it has wreaked on the people of Gaza. The United Kingdom position is very clear: we regard Hamas as a terrorist organisation, and it cannot be part of the future of Gaza. It could end this now.

The noble Lord points out the missile attacks on Kerem Shalom specifically, which curtailed the aid delivery. Equally, the current Rafah operation has closed the Rafah border, which was crucial for fuel supplies getting into some of the key hospitals, so we are also seized of that. On the issue of not holding Hamas to account, nothing could be further from the truth. We hold it accountable and responsible but, when we deal with this, this is not unfair scrutiny of Israel. Israel is a country that everyone from your Lordships' House stood with, and rightly so, after those abhorrent events of 7 October, and we continue to work with it as a constructive friend and partner.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-22/debates/E27EEF21-946C-4443-896D-616EF6BA374F/IsraelAndGaza>

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

A transcript of the Business and Trade Committee session referred to above by Lord Collins of Highbury and Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle can be read at <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14862/html/>

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))

The International Criminal Court recommendations widely 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 announcement of sanctions on extremist groups and individuals in the West Bank, referred to above by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-extremist-groups-and-individuals-for-settler-violence-in-the-west-bank>

A transcript of the Foreign Affairs Committee evidence session referred to above by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon can be read at <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14808/html/>

House of Commons Business and Trade Committee

UK arms exports to Israel

Chair (Liam Byrne, Labour): ... Ministers, I know that you will need no reminding of this, but for the record you will be aware of the resolution of the House on 12 August 1947, which says “that the refusal of a witness before a select committee to answer any question which may be put to him is a contempt of the House and an infraction of the undoubted right of this House to conduct any inquiry which may be necessary in the public interest”. You will also have tattooed on your minds paragraph 1.3b of the ministerial code: “Ministers have a duty to Parliament to account, and be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments and agencies”. The ministerial code also states: “Ministers should be as open as possible with Parliament and the public, refusing to provide information only when disclosure would not be in the public interest”. You will know, too, of the High Court decision on 10 July 2017, which reads “that there is an expectation, consistent with democratic values, that a person charged with making assessments of this kind”—such as decisions on arms export licences—“should be politically responsible for them”. The political accountability in this session is important in the legality of decisions you take. ...

Q46 Chris Law (SNP): ... What is the current value of UK defence and security exports to Israel?

Alan Mak (Minister for Industry and Economic Security, Department for Business and Trade): ... The last year that we have full published data for is 2022. We granted licences for defence exports worth £42 million in relation to Israel. For wider context, that represents 0.15% of the UK’s total defence export licences, and less than 1% of Israel’s defence imports. ... By way of wider context, our total exports to Israel on all categories that year were worth £3.6 billion, so that gives you a sense of the relatively low scale ... For the 12 months to the end of quarter 2 in 2023—that is, to the end of June 2023—107 defence export licences were issued to Israel, and they were valued at £41 million. You can see that there is a relatively stable trend of relatively low defence exports to Israel. Indeed, since 2008, when this sort of record keeping began, £41 million a year is around the ballpark average. I will also mention for completeness that while we issue licences for certain values, they may not necessarily be taken up because the export may never take place, or it will take place only partially. ...

Q47 Chris Law: Do you have any figures since October 2023? ...

Alan Mak: ... On 13 June, you and the public will receive statistics that cover the period 1 July to 31 December 2023, thereby covering the two quarters of 2023 where no statistics are in the public domain. ...

... the Government's position is that we would not usually publish additional portions of future data ahead of their official publication date. However, due to the exceptional circumstances of this scenario and this issue, and the interest of this Committee, the House, the courts and the media, I have asked officials to prepare an ad hoc data release on an exceptional basis. That will cover the period of 7 October 2023 to the end of May 2024. It will cover the number of extant licences issued to Israel and the licences being processed during that period, and will also provide the number of granted and refused licences since 7 October and the applications that have come in. I expect to be able to release those on or around 7 June ...

Q48 Chair: You will appreciate, Mr Mak, that that is completely unacceptable to the Committee. These are quarterly statistics; they are late; you are under a ministerial code obligation to answer in full to this Committee; and we are asking you a question that you are empowered to answer. ... we would expect this to be answered today. ...

Alan Mak: ... the statistics that are being prepared for the ad hoc release are not yet ready. As you will probably appreciate, they are complicated and take time to get right. ... In just over two weeks, we will have a dataset that is outside the normal cycle of publication, which will assist the Committee and will provide you with data that is right up to date.

Q49 Chair: Why are the quarterly stats late? ...

Kate Joseph (Director General, Economic Security and Trade Relations): We try to publish the quarterly statistics as quickly as possible ... We aim to provide them usually within a three to four-month timeframe after the end of the period to which they refer. So yes, it is true that it has been longer than it would ordinarily be ... we ... have been updating our digital systems, so we have been dual running our systems, which has added to the level of complexity. ...

Chair: It is an unfortunate time in the Department's life for those statistics not to be available.

Kate Joseph: We will publish them as soon as we possibly can. ... we do not have a specific obligation for how quickly we publish them after the end of the time period.

Q50 Chair: We've got a matter of global controversy, the UK's position is under intensive debate here in this Parliament, and you cannot supply two Members of this House with stats that should have been published some time ago. ...

Kate Joseph: We will publish that data from 2023 on 13 June. In addition, over and above our commitment to publish our data on a quarterly basis, we are also agreeing to provide to the Committee in early June much more up-to-date data on this particular issue—export licences to Israel—which will take us up to the end of this month. That is fairly unprecedented. ...

Q51 Chair: Have you provided to the courts data that is more recent than the data you are providing to Parliament?

Kate Joseph: We provided to the Court data that took us up to the end of November '23. ...

Chair: Has that data been provided to Parliament?

Kate Joseph: That data is now available to the Court. ...

Q52 Chair: ... this is an issue for the Minister. Are you telling us ... that data provided to a court has not been provided to this Parliament?

Kate Joseph: We have provided data to the Court, and that data has, I believe, been made publicly available by the claimants in court, and what we are now doing is providing a further update to that. ...

Chair: As we sit here today, the courts of this land are better informed on the data for arms exports than the Parliament of this land.

Kate Joseph: I think that that data is now publicly available.

Chair: ... that is a very poor approach to ministerial accountability. ...

Q53 Chris Law: ... given the answers we have just received, what do you think the wider public and the media will make of the suggestions you have just made that you cannot provide evidence to this Committee in such an important and timely cycle that we are in just now? Do you not think they will be disappointed?

Alan Mak: No, I don't think they will—

Chris Law: I think they will.

Alan Mak: We are providing an ad hoc data release that is outside the normal cycle. We will bring the Committee and the whole House up to date with the full picture since the conflict started—

Q54 Chris Law: With respect, Minister Mak, since October 2023 we have been supplying licences for arms export to Israel, and you have not been able to give any answer with respect to that time. After seven months, you have not got a single answer to offer this Committee. Do you not think that the public, journalists here today, and all those who have been involved in focusing on this, need to hear some answers and to hear them now—not wait until the end of June?

Alan Mak: ... I am explaining how we are going to provide the data that covers the conflict. We have worked hard, and at pace, to create a data package that will be released on or around 7 June. That will bring the Committee and the whole House right up to date. ...

Q55 Chair: ... Mr Mak, you will be aware that ... the Department refused to provide information on the grounds that somehow it was subject to some sub judice problems. Those problems do not exist ...

Alan Mak: On the sub judice point, the Secretary of State wrote back to you to confirm that she was not seeking to use sub judice in relation to that issue. She was simply saying that the Government does not comment on legal proceedings, which is a long-standing convention. ...

Q56 Julie Marson (Conservative): ... the Minister for the Armed Forces previously claimed that “the UK has provided no lethal or military equipment” to Israel since 7 October 2023. That was subsequently amended to say that “the UK Government has provided”. To set the record absolutely straight, has the UK exported lethal military and/or security goods to Israel since 7 October 2023?

Alan Mak: By way of background, the UK Government does not sell or ship defence exports to Israel, or provide lethal aid directly—unlike, say, the United States, which does do that from a state-to-state perspective. What we do in the UK is license private companies, some of which you will be aware of, to export products to Israel. That does include defence exports. ... that accounts for less than 1% of Israel's defence imports. ... We have the strategic export licensing criteria ... That is the framework around which we make our decisions. Where licences conform to those guidelines, we will allow the export to take place.

To be very clear, the UK Government does not sell or manufacture or ship arms to Israel, but we have a rigorous licensing regime for companies that do that. It is legitimate that Israel has a right to self-defence. As we all know, it has been attacked horrifically over its history, including in recent times, so it does have a legitimate right to defend itself. But the products that are exported from the UK are done by private companies, not the Government.

Q57 Julie Marson: On that basis, why was that amendment made ... The original statement was that “the UK provided” no military or lethal equipment, but it was amended to say that “the UK Government” provided no military or lethal equipment, which goes the

opposite way from your clarification.

Alan Mak: I am not aware of the context of that statement, why it was made or the wider environment in which it was made. ...

Q58 Julie Marson: Understood; thank you. Since 2008, the quantity of licences granted for the export of targeting equipment was the third highest after radar and electronic warfare components. A further 15% of the value of every F-35 exported to Israel is also produced in the UK, which Israeli military sources report being used in Gaza. How confident are you that export categories such as these will not be used to facilitate violations of international humanitarian law?

Alan Mak: ... the criteria are the framework by which we would assess exports, including defence exports to Israel. As I also said, Israel is a long-standing bilateral trade and defence partner. We have a long-standing relationship with Israel, therefore we license the export of defence products to them. They range from components for vehicles to some of the products that you mentioned, as well as UAVs and so on.

Even though the numbers are small, our relationship with Israel is important. The Foreign Secretary conducts an assessment, which you will also be aware of; it is evidence based and around Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law. The test is whether there is a clear risk that anything that we export from the UK would be used for a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The assessment is that that threshold has not been met, and therefore the position remains unchanged. We continue to support Israel and to license exports for defence in a very rigorous, methodical and technical way. ...

Q59 Julie Marson: ... Are you confident that targeting equipment and F-35s ... are not being used to facilitate violations of international humanitarian law?

Alan Mak: Our process is evidence based ... So I am confident.

Q60 Antony Higginbotham (Conservative): ... we have just been talking about the F-35 programme. ... hundreds of jobs in Burnley are reliant on that programme. It is one of a number of major aircraft programmes ... that are reliant on multinational consortia coming together. ... I wonder what you think the UK taking a position on F-35 component exports would do for the rest of the global consortia we work with, and whether that could then have an impact on other programmes that we work in global relationships with.

Alan Mak: ... We supply around 15% of the components of the aircraft during assembly and repair. We also supply components like the ejector seats for the aircraft. The majority of the components are exported to global supply hubs and global logistics hubs, where other members of the F-35 partnership can draw on those parts as needed.

When we allow exports ... we also use the strategic export licensing criteria. ... The test is the same. We have not found those exports to violate those criteria, and therefore they are allowed ...

Q61 Alan Mak: The UK is an important part of the F-35 programme. ...

I am not aware that any of our allies involved in the programme at a national Government level has chosen to suspend any extant licences to Israel, and the F-35 programme continues. ...

Q62 Chair: Can I just check—was any UK-supplied equipment used in the World Central Kitchen convoy attack?

Alan Mak: We have no evidence that it was.

Q63 Chair: Was any UK-sourced equipment used in the lethal attack on Medical Aid for Palestinians in January? ...

Andrew Mitchell (Deputy Foreign Secretary, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office): We have not so far been able to identify any UK licences for any components or equipment for use by the IDF with the Hermes 450, which is the drone that is alleged to have been used in relation to the World Central Kitchen strike. ... in the last 10 years we have granted a small number of export licences to Israel both for this drone

type—that is, the Hermes 450—and for specially designed components for this drone. However, none of those were for the use of the Israel Defence Forces.

Q64 Chair: So as far as you know, no UK-sourced equipment was used in the lethal attack on Medical Aid for Palestinians in January.

Andrew Mitchell: As far as I know, that is the case.

Chris Law: Does that include software that may be used in operations?

Andrew Mitchell: As far as I know, the answer to that question is no ...

Q65 Andy McDonald (Labour): ... In terms of the F-35, the basic premise is that we are part of a global consortium, and we want to co-operate with that. ... are the parts that will be produced in this country and that enter the programme identifiable? Do we know what they are?

Alan Mak: I understand that they are. ...

Q66 Andy McDonald: So if the decision was to impose sanctions and terminate a licence, that would not be any fetter to your contribution to the programme, because it would be specifically about parts that would be destined for deployment in this conflict. Is that right? ...

If a part is identifiable and you know where it is going to be used, then presumably if you chose to make a decision to terminate an export licence, that would not have an adverse impact on the consortium that you have referred to—that work would go on unabated. It is simply that those parts could not be used for deployment in this conflict. Is that not right? ...

Alan Mak: Our contribution is around 15% ...

Andy McDonald: But it is not going to fly without an ejector seat, is it?

Alan Mak: This is an evidence-led assessment, and the evidence suggests that the criteria have been met. There is no problem with us being part of the F-35 consortium, and therefore those parts continue to be sent, including to—

Andy McDonald: So it is the overarching assessment that is dominant here, not the parts themselves. ...

Alan Mak: Well, we have a two-layered assessment. We look at each individual licence on a case-by-case basis. ... The tests are comprehensive and the criteria have been met, so those parts continue to be used. From a broader perspective, our role in the F-35 programme remains very important to us as a country.

Q67 Andy McDonald: That is helpful because you are saying that the criteria are the dominant impact. ...

Minister Mitchell, what is the UK Government's most current assessment of Israel's intent and capability to comply with international humanitarian law?

Andrew Mitchell: Chair, I think it might be helpful, if you agree, if I set out what the process is. Then the context will be clear. The Government assess all export licence applications on a case-by-case basis against the strategic export licensing criteria. These criteria constitute guidance as required by the Export Control Act 2002. We last revised and laid the criteria before Parliament on 8 December 2021.

It is for the Secretary of State for Business and Trade ... to decide whether to amend, suspend or revoke any relevant licences or to refuse any new licence applications. The Foreign Secretary has a responsibility to provide advice to the Secretary of State for Business and Trade in accordance with the criteria to inform these decisions.

It is paragraph (c) of criterion two that makes clear that the Government will: "Not grant a licence if it determines there is a clear risk that the items might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law."

The Foreign Secretary's advice follows a methodology that the Court of Appeal accepted in judicial reviews. It draws on open-source evidence, intelligence, accounts of diplomatic and ministerial engagement and correspondence with the relevant country, in this case Israel. The analysis considers any patterns, trends or systemic weaknesses that might

exist in the country's compliance with IHL. The IHL analysis is carried out by a team in the Foreign Office. Based on that, the export control joint unit offer advice on that, and that assessment means, in terms of export licences, that the Foreign Secretary offers advice to the Business and Trade Secretary.

The Foreign Secretary announced on 9 April that, having reviewed the most recent advice about the situation in Gaza and Israel's conduct—this is the answer to Mr McDonald's question—Ministers had decided that the UK position on export licences remains unchanged.

Q68 Andy McDonald: So opposite the criteria of intent and capability, the UK Government's judgement is that Israel is in a satisfactory place on intent and capability. With reference to the ongoing operation in Rafah, you have said, alongside Lord Cameron and Lord Ahmad, on multiple separate occasions, that Israel does not have a credible plan to protect civilians. Without a credible plan in place, how can Israel demonstrate intent and capability to comply with international humanitarian law?

Andrew Mitchell: ... What we said is that we do not think an operation in Rafah should go ahead without there being a proper plan, and that we have seen no such plan ...

Q69 Andy McDonald: If you haven't seen the plan, how can you declare yourself content around Israel's intent and capability? ...

Andrew Mitchell: The significant operation in Rafah, it appears, has not yet started ...

Q70 Chair: A hundred thousand people had to move. If that is not significant—

Chris Law: Six hundred thousand. ...

Andrew Mitchell: Well, it is true that the Israel Defence Forces warned 400,000 to move, and 800,000 have moved, and we are seeking, along with our allies, to take care of them in the best way we can. ...

Q71 Andrew Mitchell: They have given a warning that 400,000 should go; 800,000 have chosen to go. But that of itself would not lead us to make a change in the assessment.

It is important to recognise that there is a very robust legal process here. It is set out in an Act of Parliament. It is a rolling legal process. It ends with advice, as I set out a moment ago, to the Business Secretary from the Foreign Secretary. The issue we are asked to adjudge is: does Israel have commitment, capability and compliance under the lines of paragraph (c) of criterion two, which I set out? When we look at it, we take account of humanitarian issues, issues to do with detainees and the military conduct of the IDF. We are not required to say that Israel has a clean bill of health. While we do not publish or comment on legal advice, we always act in a way that is consistent with it. ...

Q72 Andy McDonald: The Government previously supplied some of its IHL assessments to the High Court, which are now public knowledge. ... The Government have stated, and the courts have agreed, that political responsibility for these decisions depends on parliamentary scrutiny ... Why are the Government refusing to provide information that might explain their decisions to this Committee and to Parliament? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... Governments do not publish their legal advice ... The exception is only where there has been a summary of advice when British troops are being committed in action. ... The position today, in this appalling catastrophe that has befallen Gaza, is different from that, and we are proceeding in precisely the same way that Governments of all parties proceed in these circumstances.

Q73 Andy McDonald: But the scale of this is enormous. You talk about 600,000 people moving—

Andrew Mitchell: Eight hundred thousand.

Andy McDonald: Eight hundred thousand—and you say some have chosen to go. What choice did they have to move? Was this just, "I think I want to go and live somewhere else"? Is that not a preposterous suggestion to make—that this is a matter of free will, to say, "I am going to move somewhere else"?

Andrew Mitchell: No. I have set out the Government's structure—the strategy that Governments follow: never revealing the legal advice but acting always in accordance with it. I have set that out and you saying to me, "This situation is so awful, should we not depart from that precedent?" My answer to you is, "No, we should not depart from it."

Q74 Andy McDonald: What I am saying is that on the basis of credible NGOs, international bodies and partner countries, the threshold has long since been reached. People in this country and across the world are bewildered that the UK Government do not come to the same conclusion. ...

Andrew Mitchell: I think it is incredibly important that these decisions are not reached at the whim of a Minister at the Dispatch Box, responding to the mood in Parliament, or from what is being said in a Committee. It has to be done with a process. ...

To your point about the 800,000 people who now have decided to move—400,000 of them warned to do so by the IDF—they have moved as a result of the circumstances. ...

Q75 Chair: Can I bring the focus back to your judgment as a Minister on this point about intent to observe international humanitarian law? In your introductory answer, as you have set out eloquently to Parliament on a number of occasions, you said that a judgment of intent to comply is an important component ...

Lord Ahmad said to the Foreign Affairs Committee on 14 May: "I think Israel is really leaving many of its partners, including ourselves, pretty challenged on where we are currently on the issue of IHL"—international humanitarian law—"and how they are fulfilling their obligations", and that, "there is no plan. Israel has not shown us a credible plan... They get a leaflet in the morning saying that they must move by the afternoon; it is a pretty stark choice." ...

We are going to go through each component of the decision-making framework, and we will start with intent. If we cannot see a credible plan to adhere to international humanitarian law in Rafah, we are trying to understand how you have made a judgment that, yes, Israel does have the intent to honour international humanitarian law. ...

Andrew Mitchell: This is the result of a legal process, on which we do not comment, but we follow the results of legal advice that we receive.

On the issue of intent, you will know, Chair, that in Britain we have legal advice on issues of targeting and lawyers embedded in troops which take decisions, and that the Israeli system is very similar. ... legal entities being embedded inside the decision-making process is quite an important pointer.

Q76 Chair: As you, Lord Ahmad and Lord Cameron have said, even in the absence of a credible plan to protect civilians, you have still reached a judgment that Israel has the intent to comply with international humanitarian law.

Andrew Mitchell: ... that remains the assessment of the Government.

Q77 Chair: Was that his assessment, or was that the advice put to him?

Andrew Mitchell: ... He receives the Government's legal advice, and he acts in accordance with it. ...

Q78 Chair: You are inviting the Committee to believe that—even in the absence of a plan to protect civilians in Rafah, and given everything that you have said—you still believe that there is intent to comply with international humanitarian law.

Andrew Mitchell: The position today is unchanged ...

Q79 Chair: Do you believe, Mr Mitchell, as the Minister, that Israel currently has the intent to comply with international humanitarian law in Rafah?

Andrew Mitchell: It does not matter, Chair, what I believe; what is important is the legal process that informs that decision. ... The Foreign Secretary will receive the legal advice and, when he receives the legal advice, he will make a judgment ...

Chair: Exactly. He, as a Minister, takes the decision, not the lawyers. That is why it is important to this Committee what you think ...

Andrew Mitchell: I am not the Minister who makes the decision... Of course, I completely accept that process and the decision that the Foreign Secretary makes. ...

Chair: So this is a question that we would need to put to Lord Cameron.

Andrew Mitchell: ... he will give you the same answer ...

Andy McDonald: It is his decision. You are saying you support him. Do you agree with him?

Q80 Chair: The question is, does the Minister taking the decision believe that Israel has the intent to comply with international humanitarian law in Rafah?

Andrew Mitchell: The answer is that he would not have made the decision that he did unless he did believe that.

Q81 Brendan O'Hara (SNP): Do you think it would be fair to say that any reasonable person tuning in to this Committee today would say that it is quite obvious that this Government are finding political reasons to get the evidence to fit the criteria ...

Andrew Mitchell: No ... Indeed, I would hope they would reach the reverse: that ministerial whim—going with the flow of a Committee or a feeling in the House on any particular day—is not the right way to reach these decisions. ...

Q82 Brendan O'Hara: ... Does the UK Government regard international humanitarian law as an absolute, or is it a spectrum?

Andrew Mitchell: International humanitarian law and the criteria under which we assess whether a country is abiding by international humanitarian law are precisely what I have set out. ...

Q83 Brendan O'Hara: ... do the UK Government regard international humanitarian law as an absolute or is it a spectrum?

Andrew Mitchell: It has to be interpreted, and that is why we have the advantage of legal advice in making that interpretation. ...

Q84 Brendan O'Hara: Let me go back to 2019. In the evidence to the Court of Appeal regarding weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, the UK Government said of the use of those weapons in Yemen that Saudi breaches of international humanitarian law fell “well within the margin” of error “that would be expected in a conflict of this nature.” Where in the Geneva convention it says that to have a margin of error in international humanitarian law is acceptable, I do not know, but are the Government using that principle that was used for Saudi in 2019—that there is an acceptable margin of error within international humanitarian law—in assessing its decisions on Israel?

Andrew Mitchell: I was not privy to those discussions ...

I have been very clear that the key question we have to ask ourselves—that Ministers have to ask ourselves—and the duty that the Foreign Secretary has to discharge is: does Israel have commitment, capability and compliance? The judgment that the Government have made on the basis of legal advice is what was set out by the Foreign Secretary.

Q85 Brendan O'Hara: ... are the Government acting within margins of error when it comes to compliance with international humanitarian law? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... the process you are asking me about is precisely as I have set out to the Committee. ...

Q86 Brendan O'Hara: ... what are the margins of error that the UK Government works to within international humanitarian law?

Andrew Mitchell: ... In terms of any latitude, which is what is behind your question, I have set out the legal process. The legal process makes the proper judgment, and Ministers act in accordance with the advice they are given. ...

Q87 Chris Law: ... I know you have to wear two hats, because you are also Minister for international development and aid on the ground. I heard you talk about the profound concerns you have about the man-made humanitarian crisis in Rafah just now, so I want

to bring your attention to Rafah, notwithstanding the starvation in northern Gaza. Lord Cameron mentioned that the UK will oppose a major operation in Rafah if there is no “clear plan” to protect civilians. We have already established today that there is no clear plan. I don’t know what a major operation looks like but, given that almost half the population has fled for their lives due to leaflets that have been dropped over them by the IDF, I want to ask what your opposition would look like. How will you make sure our arms export licences are being considered as part of the UK’s overall response?

Andrew Mitchell: We are clear, Mr Law, 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. As I said earlier, we have not seen that plan, and in these circumstances, we would not support a major operation in Rafah. ...

Chris Law: ... how long has the Rafah border been closed?

Andrew Mitchell: The truth is that effectively nothing has got through Rafah since about 6 May—

Chris Law: Does that suggest the Israeli Government is not listening?

Andrew Mitchell: But the reason for that is that, in order for humanitarian supplies to flow in Rafah, there needs to be a deal between Egypt and Israel, and that is not a point that can be laid exclusively at the feet of Israel. ...

Chair: Minister Mitchell, that does not sound like a scenario that one should face when working with a country that has intent to comply with international humanitarian law.

Andrew Mitchell: Well, one would not wish to face it, but the position of Israel is that on 7 October, more Jewish people lost their lives in a pogrom of a kind that had not been seen since 1945 and the end of the holocaust. That is why the Government says—and I repeat extensively in the House of Commons—that Israel has the right of self-defence, but must abide by international humanitarian law ... We also need to do everything we can to get to a sustainable ceasefire so that, on the day after, we can move to a position where there is a serious and proper political process that delivers a two-state solution.

Q88 Chris Law: ... do you accept that starvation is being used as a weapon of war, given that UN figures show the number of children dying from starvation and malnutrition, particularly in northern Gaza but across Gaza? ... Do you accept, then, under the current circumstances ... the profound concerns about what is going on? ...

Andrew Mitchell: You cannot use starvation as a weapon of war and remain within international humanitarian law: that is clear. But a judgment is made, and we exercise that judgment on the basis of specific legal advice on these matters, and on the basis of that legal advice we have reached our conclusion. ...

Q89 Chair: ... is it your assessment that people are dying because of lack of access to aid?

Andrew Mitchell: Whether or not that was my assessment would not directly affect the judgments on international humanitarian law, because the question is upon the issue of compliance and commitment and capability. But we are extremely worried about the position of children—and everyone, really—in Gaza, and the rising IPC figures, and that is why we are doing everything we can to make sure that Israel honours the promise it made to flood Gaza with aid and increase back to 500 the number of trucks that are getting in.

Q90 Chair: The Minister for the Middle East has said that “the facilities in hospitals are dire and people are dying because of a lack of” medicines, support “and basic amenities.” Do you share that analysis?

Andrew Mitchell: I think the position of the hospitals is absolutely terrible ... That is why Britain and others are working with Israel to try and make sure that we get into Gaza the necessary food and medicines—and shelter particularly. ...

Q91 Brendan O’Hara: ... Why, in your opinion, are children dying of hunger and malnutrition in an area of the world in which food is plentiful, just 44 miles from Tel Aviv?

Why are they dying?

Andrew Mitchell: Because of the results of the appalling attack on 7 October—the extraordinary terrorist attacks by Hamas on that day.

Q92 Brendan O'Hara: So the appalling atrocity of 7 October led to crop failures—led to what? I mean, what is the direct link between that appalling atrocity and the death of innocent children from hunger 44 miles from Tel Aviv, in an area of the world where food is plentiful? Draw that line for me, please.

Andrew Mitchell: On the issue of crop failure, that is a longer-term issue for the region, but it is the direct impact of the attack on 7 October, to which Israel has an absolute right of self-defence, but they must act within humanitarian law. ...

Q93 Chair: ... you did say earlier in your evidence today that the Government does take into account past breaches in international humanitarian law when it determines how reliable assurances of intent, capacity and commitment are. Is that correct?

Andrew Mitchell: The Government takes into account all these things ...

Chair: So past breaches, or potential past breaches of international humanitarian law is one of those factors that is weighed in the balance.

Andrew Mitchell: Yes. ...

Chair: During the conflict in Yemen, I believe it was the Ministry of Defence that kept a tracker database—almost a continual register—of potential international humanitarian law violations. Does such a database exist in either your Department or Mr Mak's Department with regard to the conflict in Gaza?

Andrew Mitchell: I am not aware of it existing in my Department.

Alan Mak: I am also not aware of it existing in our Department.

Q94 Chair: Are you aware that such a database might exist in the Ministry of Defence?

Alan Mak: I am not aware that such a database in that form exists. ...

Q95 Chair: ... I ask about potential and real IHL violations and how you consider them, because in the summary defence that you provided to the courts last year you say something important at paragraph 43, on page 17. ... It is quoting from an IHL assessment that the Government have made and says, "although Israel accepted that it was under an obligation to facilitate (but not to provide) humanitarian assistance in Gaza, the Israeli Response gave no detail of the reasons for restricting the quantity of supplies of food, water and medical supplies. The decision of the Israeli Cabinet of 18 October 2023 had linked the supply of humanitarian assistance to the release of hostages. The assessment noted that the absence of further explanation raised concerns regarding the commitment to comply with the obligation not to arbitrarily deny access to humanitarian assistance and was relevant to an assessment of Israel's overall commitment to IHL." ...

The first conclusion that jumps out is that the Government consider that there is an obligation to facilitate humanitarian aid and not to restrict supplies of food, water and medical supplies. Secondly, it would appear that the Government consider Israel to have breached that obligation. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... in reaching any conclusion, engagement with the Government of Israel is an important part of the process, and the evidence base of the assessments includes an analysis of four things: the overall nature and dynamics of the conflict, which is very important in the context that Mr Byrne has just raised, covering the political, military, humanitarian and human rights context; the statements made by credible NGOs, international bodies and partner countries relating to the country's adherence to IHL; evidence from the country in question, including statements made by its Government and military representatives, and information regarding its military structures, processes and training; and the country's record of compliance, including legal analysis of specific allegations of IHL violations. ...

Q97 Chair: ... what I am zeroing in on here is D ... “The country’s record of compliance, including legal analysis of specific allegations of IHL violations.” It would appear in the court documents that His Majesty’s Government have provided that the Government do accept that there was an IHL violation in the linking of the issue around unacceptable retention of hostages and the provision or facilitation of aid. I am asking you, do you accept that there was a violation of international humanitarian law in that instance?

Andrew Mitchell: There may or may not have been, but in terms of the inquiry that the Committee is conducting, that is an issue on which legal advice would be given and received by the Foreign Secretary. On the basis of that legal advice, he would then reach his conclusions on whether or not international humanitarian law had been breached and whether—as I keep repeatedly saying—the three key criteria under 2c were breached, and then he would reach his conclusions. But for the assessment of that, the basis would come to him through legal advice ...

Q98 Chair: You will have no doubt seen the US State Department report to Congress, under section 2 of the National Security Memorandum, and you will no doubt know that it concluded—I am quoting here—that: “it is reasonable to assess that defense articles covered under NSM-20”, which is the Act in question, “have been used by Israeli security forces since October 7 in instances inconsistent with its IHL obligations or with established best practices for mitigating civilian harm.” Are you aware of that conclusion from the United States?

Andrew Mitchell: ... we note what our allies and partners conclude ... but we have our own processes and we stick religiously to those. ...

Q99 Chair: ... In the criteria that you have set out and rehearsed us for several times this afternoon, one of the factors that you consider ... is “Evidence from the country in question, including government statements, and information” on “military structures and training”, and then, under factor B, you take into account “Statements by credible NGOs, international bodies and partner countries”. ...

Q100 Chair: So you would weigh this evidence from the United States when making a decision.

Andrew Mitchell: Yes, but the important word is “weigh” ...

Q101 Chair: You will also be aware, because you have commented on it in public in the last 24 hours, of the statements made by the International Criminal Court in the issue of arrest warrants. You will notice that those arrest warrants include warrants for the arrest of Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, and you will know that among the many issues cited is starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, a war crime contrary to article 2(b)(xxv) of the statute. I just want to check that, despite what you have said about these statements, this would also be a factor that is weighed in category B when you are making assessments about capacity intent to stick to international humanitarian law.

Andrew Mitchell: Of course. ... we are supporters of the ICC and we are signatories to the Rome Statute, but that does not mean that we are devoid of an opinion. The opinion of the British Government is that the ICC’s actions—although they are at a very early stage ... are unhelpful if we are trying to get aid in, get the hostages out, get a sustainable ceasefire, and then move on to the day after and a credible plan to resolve this long-standing issue, which has poisoned the well of international opinion around the world.

Q102 Chair: ... we have basically put to you four different pieces of evidence: the evidence that you yourself have given the House that there is no credible plan to protect civilians; the evidence that you have given to the courts that says there has been an IHL breach; thirdly, the conclusions reached by the United States that there had been an IHL breach; and fourthly, the evidence cited in the ICC arrest warrants. You are inviting us to believe that, when you put all four of those factors into an assessment, the conclusion you still reach is that Israel has the intent and capacity to follow international humanitarian law, and

therefore arms export licences are still okay.

Andrew Mitchell: That is precisely the right conclusion, but I want to emphasise that this is on a rolling basis; it is not a static process. We have an open mind about whether things could change. ...

I should just emphasise that no Government has sought to reveal its legal advice. We are sticking to the precedents of past Governments, including those of the Government in which you were a distinguished Cabinet member. ...

Chair: ... You will understand that when the Committee has before it evidence from yourself that there is no credible plan to protect civilians, the Court submission that you made saying that there was an IHL breach by Israel, evidence from the United States saying that there was an IHL breach by Israel, and the evidence provided in the ICC arrest warrant, many of us will look at that evidence in the round and wonder how on earth someone can make a rational decision to keep arms export licences open. ...

Q103 Antony Higginbotham: I want to come back to the overall assessment that is made on strategic licences. I want to try to understand where the context for the conflict comes into it. Where in the assessment is the context of 7 October—the largest loss of Jewish life since the holocaust? Where is that factored in? Where is it factored in that, just a month or so ago, Israel suffered another significant attack from the state of Iran? Where is it factored in that Hamas continues to receive financial and military support from the Iranian state? From this diagram, I cannot see where all that is factored in. Is it factored in through the ECJU [Export Control Joint Unit]? Is it factored into the advice given to the Foreign Secretary? Is it factored in at the final stage, when the Secretary of State for Business and Trade comes to make her decision? Or is it peppered throughout the whole process?

Andrew Mitchell: You are identifying a number of important and interesting political points. For example, suppose we had decided that it was necessary for an arms embargo to take place about two and a half weeks ago, when it was put to us in Parliament. The subsequent weekend saw a direct Iranian attack—not just by drones, but by cruise missiles—on Israel, and British military personnel were in action and British weapons were used to defend Israel. I think that, politically, many people would have thought it bizarre if we had imposed at that earlier stage an arms embargo and yet were using our own resources and military assets to defend Israel.

I think that underlines the point that I am making, which is that we do not do these things as a whim of politicians; we do it in a way set down and authorised by Act of Parliament, agreed by Parliament. ...

Q104 Andrew Mitchell: The overall nature and dynamics of the conflict are an appalling attack on Israel on 7 October and the fact that, under international law, Israel has the right of self-defence for what happened, but that right of self-defence must be conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law. ...

Q106 Andy McDonald: I would like to return to this issue of the evidence and compliance. The Foreign Secretary stated on 12 December 2023 that he was “satisfied that there was good evidence to support a judgment that Israel is committed to comply with IHL.” Why did he feel unable to state clearly that the evidence showed that Israel was committed to compliance, only that there was “good evidence” to support such a decision? There is an important distinction.

Andrew Mitchell: ... I have given the context: the attack at the hands of Hamas; Israel’s right to self-defence within humanitarian law; very many civilians have been killed; and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying their property. My answer is that we continue to have grave concerns around humanitarian access, but we judge that Israel is committed to complying with international humanitarian law overall.

Q107 Andy McDonald: The Foreign Secretary said there was “good evidence” to support that judgment. Did you believe, when confronted with the same evidence, that Israel was

committed to complying with international humanitarian law?

Mr Mitchell: Yes, I agree with the Foreign Secretary. ...

Q108 Andy McDonald: But is there not a risk that that may not be accurate? If we go back to criterion 2, there is a clear risk that “items might be used to ‘commit or facilitate’...a serious violation of international humanitarian law.” He has not said categorically that he is convinced that Israel is committed to compliance, merely that there was “good evidence” to support that view. ...

Andrew Mitchell: It is important to recognise, as I said, that this is—the technical term is an iterative process. It is not set in aspic ...

Q109 Andy McDonald: That is a remarkable position given what we have just heard with the pronouncements from the ICC and the ICJ, and now the United States of America has expressed itself in the terms that the Chair has described. Are we really saying that the UK Government is content that there is no clear risk—or no risk—of Israel being in breach of IHL?

Andrew Mitchell: The British Government is appalled at what is happening. It is doing everything it can to alleviate suffering and spending an inordinate amount of time with our very strong foreign service trying to look at the day after.

Q110 Andy McDonald: I am talking about today. If the British Government is appalled, what is it appalled about?

Andrew Mitchell: We are appalled at the appalling attack that took place on 7 October. We are appalled at the situation in Gaza. ...

Q111 Andy McDonald: Well, it is pretty incomprehensible. Mr Mak, given that the only test is whether there is a clear risk of serious violations, why did the Secretary of State for Business and Trade make the decision not to suspend the licences?

Alan Mak: ... the criteria of the test are very clear. Criterion 2c is whether there is a clear risk that items exported from the UK might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. As you have heard from the Deputy Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State takes advice from the Foreign Secretary, who will have received information from the Foreign Office and the process that you referred to. She has regard to those factors and has come to the conclusion that the threshold has not been met, and therefore the position remains unchanged. But as the Deputy Foreign Secretary rightly said, we keep this under review on a rolling basis. ...

Q112 Chair: ... It is your view, Mr Mak, that there is not a clear risk today of a violation of international humanitarian law through keeping open our arms export licences to Israel?

Alan Mak: I am not the ultimate decision maker, but I am aware of the criteria and the role of the Secretary of State for Business and Trade as the decision maker. She has made that decision and she has made it based on the evidence she has received from the Foreign Secretary. That is the methodical and rigorous process that we have as a Government, and it has been followed.

Q113 Ian Lavery (Labour): ... I am slightly concerned about the fact that the eminent lawyers who have been advising Karim Khan, the ICC prosecutor, reached the conclusion that Israel was in breach of international law, which is completely different from what the Home Office lawyers have said. They have concluded that Israel was not in breach of any international law. I am wondering why there would be such a difference. ...

I have a couple of other minor points. Can the Minister confirm what type of legal training the Home Office lawyers have had in this field? Are they actually confident sitting in the Home Office and advising Ministers that Israel is not in breach of international humanitarian law?

Andrew Mitchell: ... They are not Home Office lawyers; they are the Government’s lawyers... Presumably you, like me, Mr Lavery, are not a lawyer, and one of the things I would observe in answer to your question is that 600 lawyers set out one position in the

press, on one side of this argument, and I certainly went to bed assuming that that was conclusive evidence. A few days later, 1,000 lawyers set out the precise opposite. That shows that it is possible to be a lawyer and reach a completely different conclusion from that reached by another lawyer. But equally, it shows the importance of Ministers having their own lawyers, who give them expert legal advice upon which they act and within which they remain.

Q114 Ian Lavery: ... how confident are you ... that the Government lawyers ... are confident in themselves that they are giving the correct advice and that Israel is not in breach of international law? ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... if Mr Lavery is asking me my personal opinion as a Minister about Government lawyers and the Government Legal Service, this is my third stint in government so far, and my experience of the Government lawyers throughout that time has been absolutely first class.

Q115 Andy McDonald: ... Lord Cameron noted in his 15 April 2024 letter to the Foreign Affairs Committee that he had reviewed the most recent advice about the situation in Gaza on 8 April 2024, which informed his decision not to recommend a change to licensing decisions. Can the Deputy Foreign Secretary tell us what time period was covered by that advice?

Andrew Mitchell: I think it was up to the end of January.

Q116 Andy McDonald: The International Court of Justice provisional measures order of 26 January 2024 stated that “there is a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused to the rights” found by the Court to be plausible, namely the rights of Palestinians. How do you interpret this finding when considering potential clear risks of IHL violations by Israel in Gaza?

Andrew Mitchell: ... There has been a lot of misunderstanding about what the ICJ decided in its ruling on the provisional measures, and this was helpfully clarified in an interview on 25 April by Joan Donoghue, the former president of the ICJ, who presided over the Court that handed down the initial provisional measures order in South Africa’s case against Israel. I think it is important that I just repeat what she said: “The court decided that the Palestinians had a plausible right to be protected from genocide and that South Africa had the right to present that claim in the court. It then looked at the facts as well. But it did not decide—and this is something where I’m correcting what’s often said in the media—it didn’t decide that the claim of genocide was plausible. It did emphasise in the order that there was a risk of irreparable harm to the Palestinian right to be protected from genocide. But the shorthand that often appears, which is that there’s a plausible case of genocide, isn’t what the court decided.” ...

Q117 Chair: ... We are very disappointed that Parliament is not going to have the up-to-date facts, which have been provided to the Court, ahead of the debate that we have on Thursday. Many of us will be fairly surprised at the judgments reached, given the framework that you have set out and the evidence that we have gone through today ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14862/html/>

A transcript of the 1947 debate and subsequent resolution referred to above by Liam Byrne can be read at

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1947-08-12/debates/f7d9f6f0-3e3f-4256-a916-d376c8137e8b/CommitteeOfPrivileges\(SpecialReport\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1947-08-12/debates/f7d9f6f0-3e3f-4256-a916-d376c8137e8b/CommitteeOfPrivileges(SpecialReport))

The Ministerial Code, referred to above by Liam Byrne, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63a4628bd3bf7f37654767f2/Ministerial_Code.pdf

The High Court judgement referred to above by Liam Byrne can be read at

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/r-oao-campaign-against-arms-trade-v-ssfit-and-others1.pdf>

The Strategic Export Licencing Criteria, referred to above by Alan Mak, can be read at <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

A transcript of the Foreign Affairs Committee evidence session referred to above by Liam Byrne can be read at <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14808/html/>

The summary defence referred to above by Liam Byrne can be read at https://www.glanlaw.org/files/ugd/26e1a5_14f16c2640e24bc99211ee41243e9c45.pdf

The US State Department report to Congress, referred to above by Liam Byrne, can be read at <https://www.justsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Report-to-Congress-under-Section-2-of-the-National-Security-Memorandum-on-Safeguards-and-Accountability-with-Respect-to-Transferred-Defense.pdf>

The International Criminal Court statement referred to above by Liam Byrne 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 Andrew Mitchell, can be read at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/Publications/Rome-Statute.pdf>

The legal advice from 600 lawyers referred to above by Andrew Mitchell can be read at <https://lawyersletter.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Gaza-letter-FIN-3-April.pdf>

The legal advice from 1,000 lawyers referred to above by Andrew Mitchell can be read at <https://www.ukfi.com/top-uk-lawyers-tell-rishi-no-obligation-to-sanction-israel>

Lord Cameron's letter referred to above by Andy McDonald can be read at <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/44387/documents/220714/default/>

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

The interview with Joan Donoghue, referred to above by Andrew Mitchell, can be watched at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001yplc>

and a clip of the relevant section can be watched at <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-68906919>

UK Parliament Petition

UNRWA funding

The petition of residents of the constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk, Declares that the crisis in Gaza has already resulted in thousands of deaths and shows no sign of a resolution; further declares that UNRWA has warned that not enough aid is entering the besieged Gaza strip, and that a quarter of the Gazan population has been determined as an IPC Stage 5 crisis, which means that they are under immediate threat of death from starvation and destitution; notes that whilst the allegations against the 12 employees of the UNRWA are serious and must be investigated thoroughly, the UNRWA operates in the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan as well as Gaza, and the UK government publishing civilians in these places by pausing funding will have significant humanitarian repercussions.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the UK Government to help protect the rights and lives of those affected by the War in Gaza by reallocating funds to the UNRWA to ensure the immediate deliverance of humanitarian assistance to address the adverse threat to life of Palestinians. And the petitioners remain, etc.

[\[Presented by Martyn Day, Official Report, 25 March 2024; Vol. 747, c. 1360.\]](#) [P002942]

Observations from the Minister for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, United Nations and the Commonwealth (Lord Ahmad): The UK wants an immediate stop in fighting to get much needed humanitarian aid access and hostages released, to bring the Gaza conflict to a sustainable end.

Israel suffered an appalling terrorist attack on 7 October —the deadliest in its history. It has the right to defend itself but must do so in accordance with international humanitarian law. Hamas must release the hostages immediately.

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

The situation in Gaza is desperate. A shocking number of Palestinian civilians have been killed, and there is an urgent need to get more aid to the people of Gaza to prevent a famine.

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 of Internal Oversight Services investigation into these allegations. We recognise UNRWA's important role.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it, including through other UN agencies and NGOs. We more than trebled our aid commitment in the 2023-24 financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air.

As of 9 May, the UK has participated in 12 airdrops into Gaza. On 17 April we announced £3 million of additional funding for equipment to support UN and aid agencies to get more aid into Gaza, including trucks, forklifts, generators, fuel stores and lighting towers. This follows a £9.7 million package of military and civilian support to set up a maritime aid corridor to Gaza, including the deployment of a Navy ship and the establishment of the new pier to open up the maritime route which has seen the delivery of 4,000 shelter kits on 17 May.

UK support includes a field hospital, provided by UK Aid funding to UK-Med, which is up and running in Gaza and the facility has already treated thousands of patients. We have provided funding for the World Food Programme to provide 2,000 tonnes of food aid, enough to feed 275,000 people in Gaza.

Guaranteed deconfliction for aid convoys and other humanitarian work is essential.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/24052274000021/UNRWAFunding>

House of Commons Library Briefing

UK arms exports to Israel

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9964/CBP-9964.pdf>

Welsh Senedd Oral Answers

Ethical Investment Schemes

Mabon ap Gwynfor (Plaid Cymru) [OQ61163] Will the Commission provide an update on the ethical investment schemes of its pension fund? ...

... a number of demands have been made over the years on divesting from investments in unethical companies. There is great concern at the moment that the Commission pension pot, and things relating to Commission pensions, could be used to fund arms companies, and those weapons, in turn, being sold to the Israeli Government, who would then use those weapons to attack hospitals, charities, schools and so on in Gaza. So, can you give us assurance that you, as a Commission, will look into this issue and put pressure, where it is appropriate and possible to do so, on pension investors to divest from companies that produce arms? ...

Hefin David (Commissioner): ... But certainly what he said, I think, is worth that dialogue, and perhaps a response from the pension board to you. Perhaps you might want to write to the pension board directly with these issues. Certainly, the pension board is interested in long-term investment in companies that are likely to be sustainable and keep a strategy that is around appropriate investments. ...

Peredur Owen Griffiths (Plaid Cymru): I'd just like to follow on from Mabon's question and ask specifically about what can be done to divest from Israeli companies in general, given that an increasing majority people are not just against, but reviled by Israel's continuing offensive in Gaza and its bloody consequences. It's long overdue that we act upon this. Many people will be horrified to learn that their pension investments may potentially be sustaining a war economy that is causing so much death and destruction for the people of Gaza. I want to know what the Senedd can do to do its part in bringing about the end of this horrific conflict and play its part in bringing about peace, humanity and a future for Palestine, through its pension schemes, but also through its procurement processes.

Hefin David: I think I'd refer you to the answer I gave to Mabon, but also the pension board reviews the environmental, social and governance credentials of its managers annually, and questions its advisors on the managers' approach to the environmental, social and governance issues at each pension board meeting. So, again, at the next pension board meeting, I'm happy to raise it, and I'm sure Mike Hedges would say the same thing. I'll repeat what I've said to Mabon, and what you've said is heard loud and clear.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/13912#C593284>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights

Israel: UN expert calls for probe of allegations of torture and mistreatment against Palestinian detainees

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Alice Jill Edwards, has urged the Government of Israel to investigate multiple allegations of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment against detained Palestinians since 7 October 2023.

"Persons deprived of liberty must always be treated humanely," Edwards said. "They must be provided with all protections required under international human rights and humanitarian law, whatever the circumstances of their detention."

Since the attacks of 7 October 2023, it is estimated that thousands of Palestinians including children have been detained. Palestinians from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and from Gaza are being held in prisons run by the Israeli Prison Service and in Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) camps.

The Special Rapporteur received allegations of individuals being beaten, kept in cells blindfolded and handcuffed for excessive periods, deprived of sleep, and threatened with physical and sexual violence. Other reports suggest prisoners have been insulted and exposed to acts of humiliation, such as being photographed and filmed in degrading poses, while prolonged use of zip-tie handcuffs has reportedly caused friction injuries and wounds.

“I am particularly concerned that this emerging pattern of violations, coupled with an absence of accountability and transparency, is creating a permissive environment for further abusive and humiliating treatment of Palestinians,” she said.

It appears that no effective measures have been taken by the Israeli authorities to investigate these allegations.

Since 7 October 2023, the growth in the prison population has exacerbated a pre-existing overcrowding problem leading to lowering of standards, the expert said.

“Official downgrading of conditions in certain places of detention is not acceptable. At all times, the minimum international standards must be adhered to,” she said.

“How we treat others during moments of crisis is a sign of how much we have internalised human rights,” she said. “No circumstances, however exceptional, can ever justify torture or ill-treatment.”

“The Israeli authorities must investigate all complaints and reports of torture or ill-treatment promptly, impartially, effectively and transparently. Those responsible at all levels, including commanders, must be held accountable, while victims have a right to reparation and compensation.”

The UN expert called on the Government of Israel to allow immediate access to international human rights and humanitarian observers to all the places in which Palestinians have been detained since the 7 October 2023 attacks.

“I am available to support the Government in reviewing detention conditions and standards of treatment, including by conducting an official visit to the country,” Edwards said.

The UN expert [previously](#) expressed her condemnation of the attacks of 7 October 2023 and called for accountability for those international crimes.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/israel-un-expert-calls-probe-allegations-torture-and-mistreatment-against>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Ghassan Abu-Sittah

Philippa Whitford (SNP) [26176] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he plans to make representations to the European Union on Germany’s use of the Schengen Information System to prevent British national, Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah, from entering the Schengen area; and if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of that action on (a) Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah's and (b) other British-Palestinians' freedom of expression.

Andrew Mitchell: I do not plan to make representations to the European Union on this matter.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26176>

House of Lords Oral Answers

President of Iran: Death

col 1081 **Viscount Stansgate (Labour):** To ask His Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of the implications for UK foreign policy of the death of the President of Iran.

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): My Lords, the Iranian President, Ebrahim Raisi, and Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, died in a helicopter accident on

Sunday 19 May. ... Our policy towards Iran has not changed. We remain committed to supporting the Iranian people in the challenge of the human rights abuses that they face, and, importantly, to holding Iran to account for its destabilising activity. ...

Viscount Stansgate: ... First, do the Government have access to any intelligence that may shed light on the effect of the President's death on the population at large in Iran? There have been some reports that the reaction has been somewhat muted. Secondly, are the Government or the West more generally able to do anything to use the current situation to assist pro-democracy groups in Iran, as a way of undermining support for a regime that, among other things, so brutally denies women their political and civil rights, and recently launched the first ever direct attack on Israel?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... I made reference to Iran's destabilising activity. ... our thoughts remain with the Iranian people as they continue their struggle for human rights and dignity within Iran.

Lord Hannan of Kingsclere (Conservative): ... Can [the Minister] think of any regime that has less adhered to those standards in its foreign policy and in its disrespect for territorial jurisdiction and national sovereignty, from the siege of the US embassy through to sponsoring attacks as far afield as London and Buenos Aires, through to this most recent horrific attack on Israel? ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... my noble friend articulates the extreme and intense challenges that many in the region face, not least from the destabilising activity of Iran. We have seen this in the context of the current conflict in Gaza, in support for Hamas, and through support for Hezbollah and for the Houthis in Yemen. ...

col 1082 **Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour):** ... this is a regime that is repressive at home but also aggressive abroad, not least in this country. ... we have repeatedly asked in this Chamber what the Government will do to ensure that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps cannot operate. Will he commit his Government to take urgent action to proscribe this organisation as soon as possible?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... I am not going to say what we may or may not do around proscription. What is very clear is that we have taken action directly against the influences of Iran, its people and its organisations, including the IRGC. The noble Lord is aware that we sanctioned the IRGC in its entirety, including key individuals. Iran's actions have not gone unpunished. ...

col 1083 **Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** Does the Minister share my dismay that our representative at the United Nations stood in tribute to the death of the person who is now called the "Butcher of Tehran"? ...

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated): My Lords, as I understand it, the Government have not proscribed the IRGC because they believe that we have to keep open channels of communication so that we can moderate Iran's behaviour. Given that this is a state that exports terror right across the Middle East and here in the UK, kidnaps British citizens and launched an appalling attack on Israel just a few weeks ago, can the Minister point out what benefits the Government's policy of engaging with Iran has brought?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: ... we have incredible differences and challenges, and we have held Iran to account. Importantly, the engagement that we have had even in recent weeks, in advance of the attack on Israel which the noble Lord referred to, ensured that representations were made so that we did not see an increase in Iran's destabilising influence. Those were conveyed not through any third party but directly to the now deceased Foreign Minister. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-22/debates/6B94D6FD-359F-4A3A-B4DA-A450F0E024EC/PresidentOfIranDeath>

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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>

Amendment Paper

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-04/0155/amend/criminal_rm_rep_0523.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>

Business of the house

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/E00F0136-9FC8-48E2-8418-C25850BE07DD/HolocaustMemorialBillBusinessOfTheHouse>

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/3C6046EB-8967-4852-8889-4886B4DEF2ED/HolocaustMemorialBill>

Third Reading< House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-22/debates/3C6046EB-8967-4852-8889-4886B4DEF2ED/HolocaustMemorialBill#contribution-E4855188-6736-46FD-9DD7-E307D131DBC9>

First Reading, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-22/debates/C6438EB1-472B-4F2E-9106-2CA261EED9A3/HolocaustMemorialBill>

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