



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Debate

#### Valedictory Debate

*col 1180 Ben Wallace (Conservative):* ... I could tell the House about ... the touching and important time when, as the Security Minister, I joined the right hon. Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) on a visit to a mosque in her constituency. She has campaigned against antisemitism for years and years, and she has represented the very best of Labour's position on Jewish communities and the Jewish members of her party for many decades. As an MP, those kinds of things touch you and go with you in your memories. ...

*col 1193 Ian Blackford (SNP):* ... I do regret that the House has not been able to come together to the same extent over Gaza, because we are all watching the humanitarian crisis that is taking place there. I hope that we can show leadership on that issue, agree on the need to bring peace and security to the region, and recognise the importance of delivering a two-state solution so that both communities can live together, and the responsibility on this House to show leadership to make sure we can get to that point. ...

*col 1198 Julian Knight (Independent):* ... Against all precedent, I was named in December 2022 in connection with an allegation by the Conservative party. Why was I named when multiple Members who have actually been arrested were not? A special case was made for me. I believe that that was for the following reasons. First, there was the pressure from hon. Members about my work to combat racism at Yorkshire county cricket club. It is no coincidence that this occurred three days prior to Mr Rafiq giving evidence once again to the Committee. He testified to exactly the same dirtying of his name that I

have faced over the past two years. ...

... I blew the whistle on two occasions about the Islamophobia and racism that I had seen in my party, and nothing was done. In fact, one of the culprits is standing at the next election. ...

**col 1211 Andrew Percy (Conservative):** ... I also want to thank other teams I have worked with, including Conservative Friends of Israel ... and the Antisemitism Policy Trust, which I have worked very closely with, including with Danny Stone ...

I am so proud to have served in this place. It is an amazing privilege to get that opportunity, but I am sad to be leaving at a time when a couple of issues particularly close to my heart are in the news and are of such concern. The first is the appalling rise in Jew hate—antisemitism—in this country. It breaks my heart to see Jewish people in this country frightened and afraid to go about their business, showing their faith. It is a stain on our democracy and our country, and it is happening across the west. Antisemitism is the canary in the coalmine. ...

**col 1215 Nickie Aiken (Conservative):** ... I recently had the idea of a British Jewish history month, and I hope very much that the next Government will see it through. I have given this task to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (David Simmonds), and I know that he will see it through, because he knows what will happen if he does not. ...

**col 1257 Matthew Offord (Conservative):** ... As someone who was born and grew up in the south of England and never saw a person of colour until the age of 12, being in Hendon did not come as a great shock to me, but it has taught me a huge amount. I have a large Jewish constituency, a large Muslim constituency, Hindus, the largest Chinese community outside of Soho and Manchester, and the largest Iranian community in the whole country. There are many issues that connect those different religious groups, which I have always campaigned on ...

I have worked on issues that have brought communities together, but the reason why I have focused on the Jewish community is that they are a small number in this country—about 300,000. The number of Muslims in this country is more like 6 million, and their voices will be heard by the different Members of Parliament in this place. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) raised issues of concern to many of my constituents—issues about antisemitism and education—but I am pleased that this week, Lord Pickles published his report of the Alderney expert review, laying to rest the issue of a concentration camp on British soil during the second world war. ...

A particular issue of concern to my constituents is that of Israel, which is understandable. My hon. Friend and I visited Israel a few weeks after the 7 October attacks. We visited Kfar Aza, and I only wish that each and every Member here in Parliament could experience what we did. I have not said this before, but my hon. Friend said to me that he could not take pictures during that day, and I told him that we must. Just as Bert Hardy and other photographers went into Bergen-Belsen and the other concentration camps, I said, “We have to go there and take pictures, so that the world knows this really did happen.” We have had people saying that it did not happen, but I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it did.

I would be one of those hawkish Members who wants to see the issue in Gaza resolved, but I do not believe a ceasefire now would achieve that. I do not want to see any deaths on any side, but when Members said recently in a debate that there had been 30,000 civilian deaths, I tried to challenge that. We do not know how many of those people are civilians and how many are Hamas fighters—the Foreign Office said that it has not made a prediction of that number—but we do know that 80% of people in Gaza support Hamas, and Hamas has got to be removed.

The decision of Ireland, Norway and Spain this week to recognise an independent Palestinian state is not only wrong, but allows the conclusion to emerge that terrorism

works, and we cannot allow that. It is simply impossible to recognise a state that has never existed in any meaningful form, so what exactly are those countries recognising? I gently say to the premiers of Spain and Ireland that they have never particularly recognised their minority communities.

*col 1258* My right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) said that you should never ask a question in this place if you do not know the answer. There was an occasion when I asked the former Prime Minister—now Lord Cameron—if he would visit Israel. I have to say that one of the best experiences of being in Parliament was the moment when I visited Lord Cameron in his suite at the King David hotel. We walked past the guys with machine guns guarding him, and we sat and drank whisky with him. I have to say that it was not that different from sitting on the throne in Saddam Hussein's palace in Baghdad—of course, without Saddam Hussein, and with whisky. ...

I have had great people working with me in the constituency—some political, some not. I particularly think of people like ... Rabbi Ginsbury, Simon Rea and Mushtaq Rehman, the respective leaders of their religious communities. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-05-24/debates/5DAFA076-1E8A-4498-8BCE-E3BFA7C8D725/ValedictoryDebate>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Universities: Antisemitism

**Lord Weir of Ballyholme (DUP)** [HL4608] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the scale of antisemitic activity and incidents currently being committed on university campuses.

**Baroness Barran:** According to the Community Security Trust, there was an increase of 203% in university-related antisemitic incidents in 2023, which rose from 60 in 2022 to 182 in 2023. Of these 182 incidents, 148, or 81%, occurred in the aftermath of 7 October, and 134, or 74%, overtly referred to Israel and events in the Middle East and included anti-Jewish content or targeting. The department continues to monitor the situation and to support higher education providers to manage incidents.

On 9 May 2024 the Secretary of State chaired a roundtable at 10 Downing Street with Vice-Chancellors from universities across the UK, joined by the Prime Minister and other Ministers. The discussion focused on tackling antisemitism in higher education (HE), including preventing an escalation of protest activity such as that seen in the United States in recent weeks.

On the same day the department announced the intention to provide £500,000 to the University Jewish Chaplaincy, enabling it to rapidly boost the vital support it offers to Jewish students on campus.

In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £7 million to tackle antisemitism in education. The cornerstone of this package for HE will be a new framework that will enable universities to demonstrate through their processes and practice a commitment to preventing and tackling antisemitic abuse.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/hl4608>

*The CST data referred to above can be read at*

[https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic\\_Incidents\\_Report\\_2023.1707834969.pdf](https://cst.org.uk/data/file/9/f/Antisemitic_Incidents_Report_2023.1707834969.pdf)

*Information about the roundtable and funding for University Jewish Chaplaincy, both referred to above, can be read at*

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

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

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

### **Universities: Antisemitism**

**Lord Weir of Ballyholme (DUP)** [HL4609] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with university Vice Chancellors to combat antisemitism on university campuses; and what steps they intend to take to improve the situation.

**Baroness Barran:** On 9th May 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, chaired a roundtable at No 10 Downing Street with Vice Chancellors from universities across the UK and was joined by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, and other Ministers. The discussion focused on tackling antisemitism in higher education, including preventing an escalation of protest activity such as that seen in the United States in recent weeks.

On the same day, the department announced its intention to provide £500,000 to the University Jewish Chaplaincy, enabling it to rapidly boost the vital support it offers to Jewish students on campus.

In his Autumn Statement, my right hon Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, announced £7 million to tackle antisemitism in education. The cornerstone of this package for higher education will be a new framework that will enable universities to demonstrate, through their processes and practice, a commitment to preventing and tackling antisemitic abuse.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/hl4609>

Information about the roundtable and funding for University Jewish Chaplaincy, both referred to above, can be read at

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

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

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

### **Universities: Antisemitism**

**Lord Weir of Ballyholme (DUP)** [HL4610] To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the National Union of Students to take action to combat antisemitism on university campuses.

**Baroness Barran:** The government remains disengaged from the National Union of Students (NUS) while the NUS continues to take robust action against antisemitism within its membership.

The department is pleased to see that the NUS is implementing the recommendations from the Tuck Report and will continue to monitor its progress carefully.

On 9 May 2024, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, chaired a roundtable at 10 Downing Street with Vice Chancellors from leading universities across the UK and was joined by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, and other Ministers to discuss tackling antisemitism in higher education (HE). The discussion focused on tackling antisemitism in HE, including preventing an escalation of protest activity such as that seen in the United States in recent weeks.

On the same day the department announced the intention to provide £500,000 to the University Jewish Chaplaincy, enabling it to rapidly boost the vital support it offers to Jewish students on campus.

In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £7 million to tackle antisemitism in education. The cornerstone of this package for higher

education will be a new framework that will enable universities to demonstrate through their processes and practice a commitment to preventing and tackling antisemitic abuse.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/hl4610>

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

[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/108/attachments/original/1673471780/Independent Investigation into Antisemitism Report NUS 12 January 2023.pdf](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/nus/pages/108/attachments/original/1673471780/Independent%20Investigation%20into%20Antisemitism%20Report%20NUS%2012%20January%202023.pdf)

Information about the roundtable and funding for University Jewish Chaplaincy, both referred to above, can be read at

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

The Autumn Statement referred to above can be read at

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

### Religion: Education

**Lord Warner (Crossbench)** [HL4651] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of removing subject knowledge enhancement grants for religious education upon (1) the recruitment of teachers in that area, and (2) the standard of religious education being taught in schools.

**Baroness Barran:** Recruitment and retention are crucial to every curriculum subject. The department recognises that high-quality religious education (RE) relies on well trained, confident teachers. The department will be offering a £10,000 bursary for RE trainee teachers that are starting Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in the 2024/25 academic year. The latest data available to date for this 2023/24 academic year highlights that 246 candidates have accepted an ITT offer in RE. At the same point in the cycle in the 2022/23 academic year, 145 candidates had accepted an ITT offer in RE. This represents a 59% increase.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/hl4651>

### Religion: Education

**Lord Warner (Crossbench)** [HL4652] To ask His Majesty's Government what consultation was undertaken with the religious education community before removing subject knowledge enhancement grants from religious education.

**Baroness Barran:** Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) is only one element of the department's overall teacher supply strategy and its primary objective is to support recruitment in hard-to-recruit subjects with sufficiency challenges. Considerations including SKE recruitment performance, overall Initial Teacher Training (ITT) numbers and other support available to candidates, including ITT bursaries, informed the recent decision on the SKE programme.

The SKE package is, and will continue to be, reviewed regularly to ensure SKE is targeted at the candidates that need it most. The department has plans to engage with the sector to inform future SKE in the coming months.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/hl4652>

### Religion: Education

**Lord Warner (Crossbench)** [HL4653] To ask His Majesty's Government what proportion of the successful applicants for secondary teacher training for religious education in the current recruitment year received a subject knowledge enhancement grant (1) before 10 April 2023, and (2) after that date.

**Baroness Barran:** 246 candidates have accepted an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) offer for religious education (RE) in this academic year 2023/24. 106 of those 246

candidates, or 43%, have been set subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) as a condition of their ITT offer. 58 of those started their SKE up to and including 10 April 2024 and 48 have started or are due to start from 11 April onwards.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/hl4653>

### **Community Relations: Religion**

**The Lord Bishop of Hereford** [HL4583] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the review by Colin Bloom Does government 'do God?' An independent review into how government engages with faith, published on 26 April 2023, in particular, the recommendation that "more could be done to resource and equip policy makers and officials to increase their level of awareness and discernment regarding intrafaith issues concerning exploitation and abuse"; and what steps they are taking in response.

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** We are grateful to Colin Bloom for setting out his independent recommendations on how government can improve engagement with faith, both in terms of recognising the contribution of faith communities and addressing harmful practices where they occur.

As part of our work to consider the response to the recommendations in the Bloom Review, we have engaged with a broad range of faith and belief stakeholders to understand the nuances of the recommendations and their impact on faith and belief communities, and to help us understand how some of the recommendations might work in practice.

Government will carefully consider all recommendations of the review and will respond in due course. This will include considering the review's recommendations in relation to faith-based exploitation and abuse, and the importance of faith literacy more broadly.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/hl4583>

*The Bloom Review, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64478b4f529eda00123b0397/The\\_Bloom\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64478b4f529eda00123b0397/The_Bloom_Review.pdf)

### **Public Sector: Religion**

**The Lord Bishop of Lichfield** [HL4693] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the faith literacy of those on the public payroll, including (1) civil servants, (2) the police, (3) NHS staff, and (4) HM Prison and Probation Service staff.

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** We acknowledge the importance of faith literacy in the civil service and our public services, both to help us to fully understand and celebrate the role of faith in our society, but also to empower government to tackle harmful practices where they occur.

Improving faith literacy is one of the 22 recommendations put forward by Colin Bloom in his independent review of faith engagement. As with all recommendations of the review, the Government will consider this carefully and respond in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/hl4693>

*The Bloom Review, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64478b4f529eda00123b0397/The\\_Bloom\\_Review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64478b4f529eda00123b0397/The_Bloom_Review.pdf)

## General Election 2024

The deadline to register to vote in the General Election is  
Tuesday 18 June.

[Click here to register.](#)

## House of Commons Library Briefing

**Timetable for the 2024 general election**

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/timetable-for-the-2024-general-election/>

## The Electoral Commission

**Voting and elections**

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/voting-and-elections>

## Charity Commission

**Charity campaigning in a general election period**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-campaigning-in-a-general-election-year>

## Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

**Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator: political issues**

<https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/charities-and-campaigning-on-political-issues/>

**Updated guidance for Scottish charities on campaigning about political issues**

<https://www.oscr.org.uk/news/updated-guidance-for-scottish-charities-on-campaigning-about-political-issues/>

## Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

**Charities and politics**

<https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/media/1149/20190530-ccni-eg036-political-activity-and-campaigning-guidance-for-charities-v20-for-publicationdocx.pdf>

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## Israel

**See also the Commons “Valedictory Debate” that is included in the home Affairs section above.**

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Palestinians: Refugees**

**Rupa Huq (Labour)** [25887] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an estimate of the number of unaccompanied children in Gaza that have family in the UK; and whether he is taking steps to support family reunions in those cases.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Far too many children in Gaza have been orphaned or separated from their parents. We do not have an estimate of how many of these may have family in the UK. The UK is supporting a number of agencies who are targeting funding to respond to the needs of these children. The UK's funding to the Red Cross Movement, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Pooled Fund has supported their work to identify unaccompanied minors, provide care options, and in some cases reunited children with family members. Palestinians who wish to join family members in the UK may apply to do so via the existing range of routes available. Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules and our suitability requirements. Consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances raised and may be taken into account where certain requirements are not met.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25887>

#### **Hamas and Israel: Arrest Warrants**

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [27200] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the issuance of arrest warrants for (a) Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and (b) senior Hamas leaders by the International Criminal Court.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We do not believe that seeking warrants will help get hostages out, get aid in, or deliver a sustainable ceasefire. This remains the UK's priority. As we have also said from the outset, we do not think the ICC has jurisdiction in this case. The UK has not yet recognised Palestine as a state, and Israel is not a State Party to the Rome Statute.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-20/27200>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **Gaza and Israel: International Law**

**Alison Thewliss (SNP)** [26503] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the joint statement by international NGOs on humanitarian law in Gaza published by Amnesty International on 15 May 2024.

**Clive Lewis (Labour)** [26535] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the joint statement by international NGOs on humanitarian law in Gaza, published by Amnesty International on 15 May 2024.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law to be respected and civilians to be protected.

We have one of the most robust arms export systems in the world, enshrined in law through the Export Control Act, and implemented through our Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The Foreign Secretary has reviewed the most recent advice about the situation in Gaza and Israel, and his latest assessment leaves our



position on export licences unchanged. We will keep the position under review. Hamas, along with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), are already sanctioned by the UK in their entirety and are subject to an asset freeze and arms embargo. The UK, working closely with the US and other allies, has imposed several new rounds of coordinated sanctions against Hamas since 7 October, to disrupt the terrorist group's financial networks and cut off their access to funding.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26503>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26535>

*The statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/world-leaders-fail-to-act-as-israeli-invasion-of-rafah-worsens-humanitarian-catastrophe/>

*The Criteria referred to above can be read at*

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

### **Hamas: Israel**

**Nicola Richards (Conservative)** [26925] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent estimate he has made of the number of British (a) dual-nationals and (b) citizens that were killed during the terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office were informed of the deaths of 15 British nationals killed in the terrorist attacks in Israel on 7 October 2023.

We do not have details on how many of the victims were dual nationals.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26925>

### **Amit Soussana**

**Stephen Crabb (Conservative)** [26389] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the testimony of Amit Soussana.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The Government continues to be appalled by the reports of conflict-related sexual violence committed by Hamas on 7 October and against hostages, including the report from UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on sexual violence in conflict, Pramila Patten. The UK condemns sexual violence unequivocally and without exception. Hamas must release all hostages and all reports of sexual violence must be fully investigated to ensure justice for survivors and victims. The UK has been working with partners across the region to secure the release of hostages, including British nationals and their families.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26389>

*A report of Amit Soussana's testimony can be read at*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/26/world/middleeast/hamas-hostage-sexual-assault.html>

*The UN report referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf>

### **Israel: Hamas**

**Andrew Percy (Conservative)** [26112] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what steps he is taking to support Israeli military operations against Hamas.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Israel suffered an appalling terrorist attack on 7 October - the deadliest in its history. As we have said from the outset, Israel has the right to

defend itself in accordance with international humanitarian law, and Hamas must release the hostages immediately.

We will continue to call for the immediate release of all hostages. Nothing can justify their continued detention. Their families are showing great courage in horrific circumstances. We want to see a deal agreed that would ensure the release of hostages and a pause in the fighting.

We are clear that building momentum towards a lasting peace will require the release of all hostages, the removal of Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel, Hamas no-longer being in charge of Gaza, the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza accompanied by an international support package, and a political horizon to a two-state solution.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-14/26112>

### **Gaza: Hamas**

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [27012] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant to the Answer of 12 January 2024 to Question 7549 on Hamas: Audio Equipment, what steps his Department is taking to help support Israel to remove Hamas from power in the Gaza Strip.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The UK is doing all it can to reach a long-term solution to this crisis by calling for the immediate release of all hostages, the removal of Hamas' capacity to launch attacks against Israel, Hamas no-longer being in charge of Gaza, the formation of a new Palestinian Government for the West Bank and Gaza accompanied by an international support package, and a political horizon to a two-state solution.

The Prime Minister has spoken with Prime Minister Netanyahu several times, most recently on 30 April. The Foreign Secretary spoke with Foreign Minister Katz on 13 May. He also visited Israel with German Foreign Minister Baerbock on 17 April, met G7 partners in Italy immediately afterwards, and has spoken with leaders and counterparts in the OPTs, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran in recent weeks.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-20/27012>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-19/7549>

### **Turkey: Hamas**

**Nicola Richards (Conservative)** [26926] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has had recent discussions with his Turkish counterpart on the reported granting of (a) citizenship and (b) passports to senior Hamas figures (i) Ismail Haniyeh and (ii) Saleh al-Aroui by that country.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We have not recently engaged with the Turkish Government on the reported granting of citizenship and passports to senior Hamas figures. Turkey granted citizenship to Ismail Haniyeh in 2020, and Saleh al-Aroui was killed in January this year.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26926>

### **Gaza: Israel**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [27507] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of Israel's political strategy on Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Israel suffered an appalling terrorist attack on 7 October - the deadliest in its history. It has the right to defend itself 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 pause in the fighting in Gaza. We must then work with our

international partners to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire.

The UK wants to bring the Gaza conflict to a sustainable end as quickly as possible.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-21/27507>

### UNRWA

**Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op)** [26547] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, when (a) he and (b) the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs last met representatives of UNRWA.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The Minister of State for the Middle East, Lord Ahmad, met with the Commissioner General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, on 4 April and the Deputy Foreign Secretary spoke with the Commissioner General on 5 March.

They discussed the humanitarian situation in Gaza and the steps UNRWA is taking in response to the Colonna report on UNRWA's mechanisms and processes to ensure neutrality. Ministers explained that the UK will set out its position on future funding to UNRWA following careful consideration of Catherine Colonna's final report, UNRWA's response and the ongoing UN Office for Internal Oversight Services investigation into these allegations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-15/26547>

*The Colonna report, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa\\_independent\\_review\\_on\\_neutrality.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf)

*UNRWA's response referred to above can be read at*

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

### Hammas: UNRWA

**Bob Blackman (Conservative)** [16869] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will have discussions with his UN counterparts on the reports of an alleged Hammas (a) war room and (b) weapons depot being located in a UNRWA school in Nuseirat, Gaza.

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

All parties must act in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. Care must be taken to limit operations to military targets and to minimise harm to civilians and civilian objects.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26869>

### Gaza: UNRWA

**Bob Blackman (Conservative)** [26870] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will have discussions with the UN on the recently released footage of Palestinians firing from inside an UNRWA compound in eastern Rafah.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The UK takes allegations of neutrality violations extremely seriously. With regards to this specific incident, UNRWA has said that while it cannot verify the authenticity or the content of this video, it is likely that it is from an UNRWA warehouse in Rafah that was evacuated during the week of 6 May following forced displacement orders from the Israeli authorities. UNRWA has condemned the use of UN facilities by any party to the conflict for military and fighting purposes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26870>

### Hammas: UNRWA

**Nicola Richards (Conservative)** [26928] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, pursuant

to the Answer of 26 March 2024 to Question 20817 on Hamas: UNRWA, what assessment he has made of the threats faced by UNRWA staff members (a) John Ging and (b) Matthias Schmale.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Neither John Ging nor Matthias Schmale currently work for UNRWA. John Ging left the organisation in 2011 and Matthias Schmale in 2021, We hold regular discussions with UNRWA about their operations in Gaza and across the region. We are not currently aware of any threats made to their senior operations staff.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-17/26928>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-03-26/20817>

#### **Gaza: Israel**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [27505] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of Government legal advice on his policies in the context of Israel's proposed military operations in Rafah.

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

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-21/27505>

#### **Gaza: Israel**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [27508] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he is taking steps to investigate reports of Israeli air strikes on refugee camps in Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We are aware of these reports. We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law to be respected and civilians to be protected. The UK Government continues to have significant concerns over humanitarian access and protection of civilians in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary reiterated this during his visit to Israel on 17 April.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-21/27508>

#### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Matthew Offord (Conservative)** [25471] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what estimate his Department has made of the amount of humanitarian aid supplied to Gaza in the last six months; and what information his Department holds on the countries of origin of that aid.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We trebled our aid commitment in the last 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, and 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.

On 6 April, the UK announced 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. In addition, a field hospital, provided by UK Aid funding to UK-Med, is up and running in Gaza and has already treated thousands of patients, and we have funded more than 2,000 tonnes of food aid, which entered Gaza in March for distribution by the World Food Programme (WFP) on the ground.

Updates on the number of aid trucks and type of aid entering Gaza are published by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) on their publicly available aid dashboard at [gazadashboard.unrwa.org](https://gazadashboard.unrwa.org).

Between 2 November and 2 May 24,390 trucks entered Gaza. It remains challenging to track deliveries by weight and origin.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-09/25471>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-aid-en-route-to-temporary-pier-off-gaza>

The UNOCHA dashboard can be accessed at

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrjoiZTVkYmEwNmMtZWYxNy00ODhLWI2ZjctNjIzMzQ5OGQxNzY5IiwidCI6IjI2MmY2YTQxLTlwZTk0NDk0MC04ZDNiLWZkZjVIZWNiNDk1NyIsImMiOiI9&pageName=ReportSection3306863add46319dc574>

### Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [27495] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, how much aid he has given to organisations providing humanitarian assistance in Gaza since October 2023.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We committed over £100 million in 2023-24. This funding was mainly allocated and delivered through partners; for example: £8.25 million to the World Food Programme, £13.75 million to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Pooled Fund, £7.75 million to the Red Cross/Crescent Movement, £12.22 million to UNICEF, £2.75 million to Emergency Health Response, £1.35 million to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, £1.5 million to WHO.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-21/27495>

### Gaza: Fuels

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [25909] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made an estimate of the amount of fuel required to operate electricity generators in Gaza; and if he will make an assessment of the adequacy of fuel supplies available in Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The UN and humanitarian agencies estimate that 200,000 litres of fuel a day are needed in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-13/25909>

### Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [27506] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, whether he has made changes to the planned distribution of aid in Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We trebled our aid commitment in the last financial year and we are doing everything we can to get more aid in as quickly as possible by land, sea and air. We have been clear that Israel must take concrete steps to increase the flow of aid into Gaza. On 17 May, the first consignment of UK aid across the new floating pier in Gaza was successfully delivered. More will follow in the coming weeks.

As the Foreign Secretary has said, maritime is just one part of the bigger picture. Land routes remain the most effective means of getting aid into Gaza at the scale needed.

Israel must ensure land routes are open and that aid gets safely to where it is needed. Guaranteed deconfliction for aid convoys and aid workers, and for other humanitarian work, remains essential.

The Foreign Secretary reiterated these points in his call with Israeli Minister Gantz on 21 May.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-21/27506>

### Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

**Lisa Nandy (Labour)** [27350] To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on ensuring safe passage of aid

convoys through (a) Israel and (b) Israeli-controlled territory in Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Attacks by extremists on aid convoys en route to Gaza are appalling. Gazans are at risk of famine and in desperate need of supplies. Israel must facilitate immediate, uninterrupted humanitarian access in Gaza, and hold attackers to account. Aid will not make a difference unless it can be properly and safely distributed. Guaranteed deconfliction for aid convoys and other humanitarian work is essential. The Foreign Secretary raised his concerns with Israeli Minister Gantz on 16 May.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-21/27350>

### Israeli Settlements

**Martyn Day (SNP) [27106]** To ask the Deputy Foreign Secretary, if he will take diplomatic steps to help prevent the expansion of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

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

On 3 May, the Foreign Secretary announced new sanctions on extremist groups and individuals for inciting and perpetrating settler violence in the West Bank. The measures impose financial restrictions on the entities and individuals, and travel restrictions on the individuals. The UK will not hesitate to take further action if needed, including through further sanctions.

The Foreign Secretary has made our position clear to his Israeli counterparts, including during his visit to the region on 17 April.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-20/27106>

*The announcement referred to above can be read at*

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

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Israel: Press Freedom

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL4516]** To ask His Majesty's Government, following the government of Israel's decision to shut down the operations of the Al Jazeera television network in that country, what discussions they have had with that government concerning press freedom.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Israel must ensure its campaign is targeted at Hamas leaders and operatives and ensure journalists can carry out their work safely. On 5 December, the UK supported a joint statement of the Media Freedom Coalition expressing concern over the repercussions for the safety of journalists and access to information due to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-09/hl4516>

### Gaza: Israel

**The Marquess of Lothian (Conservative) [HL4343]** To ask His Majesty's Government whether they are taking action, with international partners, to dissuade the government of Israel from undertaking a military ground offensive in Rafah, Gaza.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are clear that do 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 do not support a major operation in Rafah.

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 to turn that pause into a sustainable, permanent ceasefire. We must remain focused on a long-term solution to this crisis - a political horizon for the Palestinians, providing a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

We have consistently made these points to Israel, at all levels.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-05-02/hl4343>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill**

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

#### **Criminal Justice Bill**

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

#### **Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Genocide Determination Bill**

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

#### **Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill**

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

#### **\*\* Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

Message from the Commons to the House of Lords

... the following provisions shall apply in respect of the Holocaust Memorial Bill ...

If proceedings on the Bill are not completed before the day on which this Session of Parliament ... ends, further proceedings on the Bill shall be suspended ...

If a Bill is presented in the first Session in the same terms as those in which the Bill stood when proceedings on it were suspended in the current Session ...

the Bill so presented shall be ordered to be printed and shall be deemed to have been read the first and second time ...

the Standing Orders and practice of the House applicable to the Bill, so far as complied with or dispensed with in the current Session or in the previous Session of Parliament shall

be deemed to have been complied with or (as the case may be) dispensed with in the first Session ... the Bill shall be dealt with in accordance with ... paragraph 5, if the Bill has been read the third time and sent to the House of Lords ... If this paragraph applies, the Bill shall be deemed to have passed through all its stages in this House. ...

**To read the Message in full see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-05-24/debates/DFE8CCC0-3C6F-4974-B160-BF041499C87D/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/>

**Petitioning against the Holocaust Memorial Bill** (closing date 21 June 2024)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8481/petitioning-against-the-holocaust-memorial-bill/>

House of Lords: Guidance on the right to be heard

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/55634/documents/4871>

House of Lords: Guidance on submitting your petition

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/55632/documents/4869>

**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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