



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Israel

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

David Cameron Deeply distressing scenes following the airstrikes in Rafah this weekend. The IDF's investigation must be swift, comprehensive & transparent. We urgently need a deal to get hostages out & aid in, with a pause in fighting to allow work towards a long-term sustainable ceasefire.

https://x.com/David_Cameron/status/1795371966871773402

Scottish Government

John Swinney The humanitarian catastrophe we are seeing unfold in Gaza is one of the greatest moral issues of our time. The unimaginable devastation in Rafah must stop. There are no places of refuge for Palestinian civilians. I reiterate @theSNP call for a full and immediate ceasefire.

<https://x.com/JohnSwinney/status/1795132847121981803>

John Swinney The people of Palestine have suffered enough. Each of us has a duty to do whatever we can to bring about a fair and lasting peace. I've written to @RishiSunak and @Keir_Starmar urging them to join me and other EU nations in recognising Palestine as a State in its own right.

Dear Rishi and Keir,

As you know, this week Ireland, Norway and Spain will formally recognise the State of Palestine. I am calling on the UK to do the same.

Recognising Palestine as a state in its own right is the only way to move towards a just

and durable long-term peace, in the interests of both Palestinians and Israelis.

The humanitarian catastrophe we are seeing unfold in Gaza is the greatest moral issue of our time – and thus far, the response of the UK Government and of the official opposition has been disgraceful.

I urge you both to belatedly do the right thing and pledge to immediately recognise Palestine as a state in its own right.

If you will not immediately commit to doing so, I can confirm that SNP MPs will bring forward a binding vote in the House of Commons at the first possible opportunity after the General Election.

Recognition would offer hope to Palestinians that a just and durable political solution is possible and would allow both Israel and Palestine to move towards long-term peace and stability.

The people of Palestine have suffered enough, and each of us has a duty to do whatever we can to bring about a fair and lasting peace. I am clear that the hostages must be released, arms sales to Israel must end, an immediate ceasefire must be put in place and Palestine must be recognised as a State in order to ensure a lasting peace.

I urge you to join with me and the governments of other European countries today in recognising Palestine as a State in its own right. ...

<https://x.com/JohnSwinney/status/1795342617385017640>

Northern Ireland Assembly Members Statements

Gaza War: Rafah Attack

Declan Kearney (Sinn Féin): Today, Dáil Éireann finally recognises the state of Palestine. Whilst it happens 10 years after an Dáil unanimously adopted a Sinn Féin motion to do so, it is a hugely significant occasion. The right to Palestinian self-determination, sovereignty and statehood, which has now been affirmed by the Norwegian, Irish and Spanish states, stands in defiance of Israel's apartheid system in, and occupation of, Palestine.

This is day 235 of Netanyahu's genocidal war in Gaza. On Sunday night, a fireball caused by Israeli missiles fired at tents in Rafah, incinerating over 45 displaced Palestinians alive and decapitating children, was an unparalleled atrocity. It was Israel's latest response to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) order for an end to the slaughter in Gaza and the announcements by Ireland, Spain and Norway. The Western Governments that have refused to stop arming and funding that murder machine are complicit in the massacre. Sunday's atrocity was the action of an Administration that is out of control. It is beyond the pale of humanity. The denial of Palestinian national and human rights is, however, now centre stage.

The moral courage of South Africa at the ICJ has been a catalyst for turning world popular opinion. Other states in Europe will now follow Ireland's lead, but more must be done to maximise international pressure. Comprehensive political and economic sanctions must be applied, and arms embargoes must be imposed. International law must be actively enforced against Netanyahu's Government.

Every citizen, business, community group and public body can play a part by using legitimate boycott and divestment policies against Israel's war economy. Every single opportunity must be used to demand a permanent ceasefire, a complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza and the West Bank, unimpeded humanitarian access into the Gaza Strip and an end to settler colonial expansions. This Netanyahu Government have put themselves beyond all accepted international and diplomatic legal norms, and they must be totally isolated.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/05/28&docID=402612#4398983>

Gaza War: Rafah Attack

Paula Bradshaw (Alliance): I add my voice to the international community's condemnation of the murder and maiming of innocent civilians in Rafah over the past few days. The Israeli Government's pursuit of a so-called total victory in Rafah is nothing more than an attempt to annihilate the Palestinian people and everything that they hold dear. Babies, children and the elderly — all innocent, defenceless and, no doubt, extremely scared — are being caught up in the Israeli Defence Force's deadly pursuit of Hamas.

My colleague Kate Nicholl recently held a meeting in Parliament Buildings with members of the Palestinian community who live here, and I know that some Members who are in the Chamber also attended. Among the delegation was a man named Zac, who had got out of Palestine just eight days previously. He told us of the trauma that his family had to experience: first, in being displaced from their family home; and, secondly, through being moved time and time again and, on foot, having to carry children for miles from one refugee camp to another. In the camps, resources are so scarce that electricity supplies have been cut off, and even access to water is extremely limited, so, amid the fear and sadness, people seeking shelter also face starvation and acute dehydration. For the Israelis to use their prized precision munitions to target those people is beyond barbaric. Even the Palestinian Red Crescent said that the air strike on Sunday evening had targeted tents for displaced people in an area that is supposed to be a safe zone. How very tragic. It is clear that the Israeli Government are defying the International Court of Justice, which recently ordered an immediate halt to their military offensive in the Rafah area.

The UK Government must continue to exert whatever pressure they can on the Israeli Government and convince them that a path must be created towards Palestinian statehood. A meaningful ceasefire must be agreed and the exchange of hostages secured without any further delay. There is no other way forward for the Middle East.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/05/28&docID=402612#4398991>

Gaza War: Rafah Attack

Gerry Carroll (People Before Profit Alliance): A "tragic mistake" is what chief terrorist Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the bombing of a collection of refugee tents in Gaza just a few days ago. That is not true. It is a complete fabrication once again from him and Israel. The Israeli state has some of the most deadly but precise and sophisticated weaponry in the world. It knew exactly what it was doing and knows exactly what it is doing. As recent revelations about its AI weaponry have shown, it knows exactly how many people are in buildings and tents and how many Palestinians it will kill with each and every missile fired and bomb dropped.

The Israeli Government and state simply do not care. They do not care when building illegal settlements, stealing the land of Palestinians. They do not care when tens of thousands are killed by their bombs. To Israel and its backers, they are simply collateral. To Israel, the Palestinians whom they kill are nameless, but we know that they have names, families, hopes, dreams and desires, all of which are wiped out in seconds by Israel's deadly bombs.

We have heard for months butcher Joe Biden repeat the lie about beheaded babies, referring to Israeli children. We then see over the weekend actual beheaded and mutilated Palestinian babies. No pictures are held up by Biden, von der Leyen, Sunak or Starmer. Once again to those in power who fund the murder machine, Palestinian lives do not matter. They matter to us in this city and across this island, however.

In response to the recent events, we need to see urgent and swift action. The Israeli ambassador to Ireland has been recalled by Tel Aviv. Our message is, "Don't come back. You're not welcome on this island". Rishi Sunak needs to stop sending weapons, money and aid to Israel, and Keir Starmer needs to grow a spine and commit to that as well. We need to see the Irish Government suspend all trade with Israel. We need to see sanctions

and sanctions and sanctions on Israel to stop the terror. Despite the actions of Israel, the Palestinian people and Palestine will never die.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/05/28&docID=402612#4399019>

UN Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process

Statement by UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, on Rafah

“I condemn last night’s Israeli airstrikes which hit tents for displaced people in the southern Gaza city of Rafah and have tragically led to the reported loss of more than 35 Palestinian lives, including women and children, and dozens of injuries.

While the IDF said it struck a Hamas installation and killed two senior Hamas militants in the strikes, I am deeply troubled by the deaths of so many women and children in an area where people have sought shelter.

I call upon the Israeli authorities to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into this incident, hold those responsible for any wrongdoing to account, and take immediate steps to better protect civilians.

All parties in the conflict must refrain from actions that set us further away from achieving an end to hostilities and further jeopardize the already fragile situation on the ground and the broader region.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for an immediate ceasefire and for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages to end the suffering of civilians.

The United Nations remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting all efforts aimed at ending the hostilities, reducing tensions, and advancing the cause of peace.”

<https://unsco.unmissions.org/statement-un-special-coordinator-middle-east-peace-process-tor-wennesland-rafah-0>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gaza: Türk voices horror at loss of life in camp after Israeli strikes

UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk on Monday voiced his horror at the further loss of civilian life in Gaza, after Israeli air strikes on Sunday hit a camp for displaced people in the southern city of Rafah.

“The images from the camp are horrific and point to no apparent change in the methods and means of warfare used by Israel that have already led to so many civilian deaths,” said Türk. “Sunday’s strike underscores once again that there is literally no safe place in Gaza.”

On 26 May, Palestinian armed groups fired a large barrage of rockets towards Tel Aviv in Israel, with several people reported to have been slightly injured. A few hours later, munitions from an Israeli aircraft struck a camp in the Al Hashash area in Rafah. Reports from the ground indicate several explosions and fires were ignited. The area was said to be sheltering people who had been displaced from North Gaza.

Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) said that the strike had targeted senior “Hamas officials”, and that they were aware of reports that civilians had been harmed in the resulting fires.

“I note that the IDF has announced a review, but what is shockingly clear is that by striking such an area, densely packed with civilians, this was an entirely predictable outcome. It is crucial that such reviews lead to accountability and changes in policy and practices,” the High Commissioner said.

"I call on Israel to cease its military offensive in Rafah Governorate, as ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ)."

On 24 May, the ICJ ordered Israel to halt its offensive and any other action in the Rafah Governorate which could bring about "the physical destruction" of the Palestinian group in Gaza.

The High Commissioner once again called on all parties to the conflict to put in place a ceasefire, given the imperative of protecting civilians.

"Palestinian armed groups must stop the firing of rockets which are inherently indiscriminate, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. They must also unconditionally release all hostages at once," Türk said.

"Israel must take immediate steps to protect civilians, and ensure they have access to essential humanitarian assistance, and release all those detained arbitrarily."

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/05/gaza-turk-voices-horror-loss-life-camp-after-israeli-strikes>

The International Court of Justice Order of 24 May 2024, referred to above can be read at <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

Palestinians with disabilities subject to unbearable consequences of the ongoing hostilities and violence in the OPT

The Committee [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities] calls upon all parties to cease attacks, violence, and hostilities against civilians. The Committee is extremely troubled that the last seven months of confrontation have led to massive destruction, death, loss and suffering for civilians in Gaza, including at least 58,000 people with disabilities, the majority of them children, older people and women. It is gravely distressed about the situation of persons with disabilities taken hostage, and the reports of killings of persons with disabilities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by Israeli forces. The Committee echoes with dismay the concerns of several international mandate-holders about the latest evacuation orders from Eastern and Southern Rafah affecting close to [one million](#) Palestinians in addition to the at least [1.7 million people in Gaza already displaced](#) - hundreds of thousands displaced multiple times.

The Committee recalls to the State of Israel as the occupying Power of its obligations pursuant to [Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (the Convention) to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict. States parties to the Convention should apply Article 11 ... The Committee calls on parties to the conflict to comply with the core principles of the laws of armed conflict during the conduct of hostilities, notably the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions, the fundamental guarantees of humane treatment and non-discrimination, and ensure unhindered access of humanitarian relief urgently needed for civilians in Gaza.

The Committee is appalled that survival and the physical and mental integrity of persons with disabilities remains at stake. They are at higher risks of dying, becoming injured and acquiring further impairments. Available data indicates that out of [79,562](#), at least 5,000 people injured were persons with disabilities and that more than 1,000 children have acquired impairment as their limbs have been removed. This figures, however, could be higher as challenges to obtain reliable data and information about persons with disabilities persists. Women and children with disabilities ... face heightened vulnerability to sexual abuse, sexually transmitted infections, and forced healthcare practices ... Older persons with disabilities, women with disabilities and children with disabilities have lost access to appropriate sanitation facilities, safe and accessible shelter and, crucially, food and water

to survive.

Children with disabilities have been exposed to a heightened risk of family separation, and their suffering is unendurable. ... Children with intellectual disabilities have been further subjected to severe disruption in the education system ...

Persons with disabilities have been put in extreme distress with the expectation that they will be the first and the next to be killed because of the limited opportunities to flee and take part in first or successive evacuations due to impairment. ... The absence of advance warning and information in accessible formats about relocation and the destruction of communication networks has rendered evacuation impossible. ...

The Committee is shocked by the disproportionate impacts on persons with disabilities due to the destruction of hospitals, the cut-off of essential services, restrictions or non-existing access to humanitarian assistance. It is deeply concerned by the lack of access to medical care and medication required for treatment of chronic diseases by persons with disabilities, the lack of access to psychosocial support and their heightened risks of death during searches and attacks to hospitals, and the reported exposure to white phosphorus and toxicity causing serious risks of developing further impairments. The siege has caused a food crisis, which further compounds the situation for persons with disabilities as they are confronted with physical barriers to get to distribution points or have no access to assistive devices or support. ...

States parties to the Convention, humanitarian stakeholders, and civil society actors should ensure disability-responsive peacebuilding, recovery and reconstruction of Gaza, in close consultation and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations. ...

To read the full statement see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/05/palestinians-disabilities-subject-unbearable-consequences-ongoing-hostilities>

Global Protection Cluster

Occupied Palestinian Territory Gaza Protection Analysis Update: The Systematic Destruction of the Fabric of Life

https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/gaza_pau_final_05.24.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

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

Criminal Justice Bill

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

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>

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