



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Israel

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign Secretary calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza on first visit to the Middle East

... David Lammy is visiting Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories today [Sunday, 14 July] on his first trip to the Middle East since becoming Foreign Secretary.

He will focus on the UK's diplomatic role in helping to bring the conflict in Gaza to an end and making progress towards long-term peace and security in the Middle East.

He will raise the urgent need for a ceasefire agreed by both sides, which includes the release of all hostages and a rapid increase of aid into Gaza.

The Foreign Secretary will also announce that the UK will provide another £5.5m this year to UK-Med to fund their life-saving work in Gaza. UK-Med is a frontline medical aid charity who send experienced humanitarian medics, including those working in the NHS, to crisis-hit regions to deliver life and limb-saving health care.

This funding will be used to support the ongoing work of their field hospitals and the emergency department at Nasser Hospital. It will allow medics, including those from the UK, to continue carrying out vital work to treat thousands more patients suffering from acute respiratory illnesses, infections, and explosive fragmentation trauma cases.

Foreign Secretary, David Lammy said: The death and destruction in Gaza is intolerable. This war must end now, with an immediate ceasefire, complied with by both sides. The fighting has got to stop, the hostages still cruelly detained by Hamas terrorists need to be released immediately and aid must be allowed in to reach the people of Gaza without restrictions.

I am meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to stress the UK's ambition and commitment to play its full diplomatic role in securing a ceasefire deal and creating the space for a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution. The world needs a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

Central to this is to see an end to expanding illegal Israeli settlements and rising settler violence in the West Bank. Here, in what should be a crucial part of a Palestinian state, alongside Gaza and East Jerusalem, we need to see a reformed and empowered Palestinian Authority.

In Israel, the Foreign Secretary will hold high-level talks with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Herzog to reiterate the need to end the conflict in Gaza and secure the

release of hostages. He will meet with hostage families with links to the UK whose loved ones have been murdered or taken by Hamas.

Highlighting more than 680 tonnes of UK aid in the region and waiting to enter Gaza, including medicines, shelters and hygiene kits, the Foreign Secretary will push the desperate need to rapidly increase aid into Gaza.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Foreign Secretary will welcome the Palestinian Authority's commitment to delivering reform and reiterate the UK's support to PM Mustafa and his government.

The UK has provided £10 million in aid to support the Palestinian Authority this financial year through the World Bank. The funding will provide vital support for key services, for example through the payment of salaries for 8,200 doctors, nurses and other health workers over two months.

In meetings with President Abbas and Prime Minister Mustafa, he will highlight his commitment to recognising a Palestinian state as an undeniable right of the Palestinian people, and as a contribution to a renewed peace process which results in a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. He will also call out settlements in the West Bank as illegal and harmful to a two-state solution on visit to a Palestinian community.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-calls-for-immediate-ceasefire-in-gaza-on-first-visit-to-the-middle-east>

The UK recognises the importance of UNRWA's mandate: UK statement at the UNRWA Pledging Conference

The devastating violence in Gaza has gone on for far too long. And I pay tribute to the work of UNRWA in unprecedentedly challenging circumstances and to the leadership of Commissioner General Lazzarini. In one of his first acts as UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer set out the clear and urgent need for an immediate ceasefire that leads to a sustainable peace with security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. We are calling for the release of all the hostages, the upholding of international humanitarian law, and a rapid increase of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

... Palestinians in Gaza are facing a humanitarian catastrophe and the very real risk of famine. For months they have suffered unbearable hardship without the food and protection from harm that they need. Too many Palestinian civilians are being killed, and much of civilian infrastructure essential to life has been destroyed. The UK is committed to working with our international partners to alleviate this suffering and get more aid to the civilians who need it most. ...

We recognise that UNRWA is absolutely central to these efforts. It is playing a critically important role in getting aid to those who need it in Gaza and providing essential services, including healthcare and education, to Palestinian refugees across the region. ...

... we were appalled by the allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attacks against Israel. The Secretary-General and the Commissioner General of UNRWA took these allegations seriously and acted decisively. And we are confident that UNRWA is taking robust action in response Catherine Colonna's independent review, to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality, transparency and accountability.

The UK recognises the importance of UNRWA's mandate and the need for UNRWA to operate on a sustainable financial footing. Following last week's elections in the United Kingdom, the new Foreign Secretary is closely considering resuming UK funding to UNRWA.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-recognises-the-importance-of-unrwas-mandate-uk-statement-at-the-unrwa-pledging-conference>

The Colonna review, referred to above, can be read at https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf

Israeli settlements in the West Bank: G7 joint statement

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the EU, join the UN and the European Union in condemning the announcement by Israeli Finance Minister Smotrich that 5 outposts are to be legalised in the West Bank.

We also reject the decision by the Government of Israel to declare over 1,270 hectares of land in the West Bank as 'state lands' – the largest such declaration of state land since the Oslo Accords – and the decision to expand existing settlements in the occupied West Bank by 5,295 new housing units and to establish 3 new settlements. The Government of Israel's settlement program is inconsistent with international law, and counterproductive to the cause of peace.

We reaffirm our commitment to a lasting and sustainable peace in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, on the basis of the two-state solution. We have therefore consistently expressed our opposition to the expansion of settlements and, as in previous cases, we urge the Government of Israel to reverse this decision.

Further, maintaining economic stability in the West Bank is critical for regional security. In this context, we take note of the latest transfers of parts of the clearance revenues to the Palestinian Authority, but we urge Israel to release all withheld clearance revenues in accordance with the Paris Protocols, remove or relax measures that exacerbate the economic situation in the West Bank, and to take the necessary measures to ensure that correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks remain in place with proper controls.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/g7-joint-statement-on-israeli-settlements-in-the-west-bank>

United Nations

As Civilians in Gaza Are Pushed into 'Ever Deeper Circles of Hell', Donors Must Act Now to Protect UN Palestine Refugee Agency, Secretary-General Urges Pledging Conference

Every year we meet to help bridge the gap between what is pledged to UNRWA and what is needed. This year is different. Yes, we face a profound funding gap. But, Palestinians are seeing widening gaps across the board. Gaps in respect for international humanitarian law. Gaps in recognition of universal human rights and dignity for all. And for Palestinians in Gaza, not just a gap — but death, destruction and a total breakdown in law and order. Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse in Gaza — somehow, appallingly, civilians are being pushed into ever deeper circles of hell. Recent days have brought yet more evacuation orders by Israeli authorities, yet more civilian suffering and yet more bloodshed. Palestinians in Gaza keep being forced to move like human pinballs across a landscape of destruction and death.

The extreme level of fighting and devastation is incomprehensible and inexcusable — and the level of chaos is affecting every Palestinian in Gaza and all those desperately trying to get aid to them.

Nowhere is safe. Everywhere is a potential killing zone. It is high time for the parties to show the political courage and political will to finally reach a deal.

Nothing justifies the horrific attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023. And nothing justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people. Yet, Palestinians — including, of

course, Palestine refugees — are enduring the deadliest period since the Agency's creation.

As we are all painfully aware, the horror has not spared UNRWA colleagues. 195 UNRWA staff members have been killed, the highest staff death toll in UN history. Many of them were killed together with their families and loved ones.

UNRWA is also being targeted in other ways. Staff have been the subject of increasingly violent protests and virulent misinformation and disinformation campaigns. Some have been detained by Israeli security forces, and subsequently reported mistreatment and even torture. In the occupied West Bank, the presence and movements of UNRWA personnel have been severely restricted by Israeli authorities.

Yet, despite these and other obstacles, in impossible conditions, and in the midst of their own grief, the women and men of UNRWA have bravely continued their work in whatever way they can. They are the backbone of humanitarian operations in Gaza.

Can you imagine what it must be like to be in this situation? Can you imagine how our colleagues wake up day after day in a living nightmare and still deliver for Palestinians in desperate need? Because I cannot. They are doctors, nurses, counsellors, engineers, drivers and so many others, all demonstrating incredible courage and solidarity.

And they are continuing to deliver UNRWA's mandate in desperate circumstances in Gaza — while UNRWA also strives to deliver in an increasingly challenging situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria — championing human development and human rights.

Hopelessness is the greatest ally of instability. And the work of UNRWA is one of the greatest factors providing hope and stability across a troubled region. Without the necessary support and financing to UNRWA, Palestine refugees will lose a critical lifeline and the last ray of hope for a better future. To those of you who have already pledged support, I thank you.

My appeal to everyone is this: Protect UNRWA, protect UNRWA staff, and protect UNRWA's mandate — including through funding. Let me be clear: there is no alternative to UNRWA. We are working on all fronts to implement the recommendations of the Catherine Colonna Report, by strengthening UNRWA's work and risk management mechanisms.

Now is also the time to work on all fronts to support UNRWA's critical mission. And now is the time to bring an end to this terrible war, starting with an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and an immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

Ultimately, only a political solution can bring an end to this conflict — one that realizes a vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

I urge you to act — and act now. Act to instil hope in a place where it is in short supply. Act to uphold the mandate of this General Assembly to sustain UNRWA. Act in solidarity with Palestine refugees and all the Palestinian people.

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22306.doc.htm>

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

Francesca Albanese I am horrified by yet another senseless massacre of Palestinian civilians by Israel: 71 killed and nearly 300 wounded in a zone where Israel itself had told them to seek refuge. The justification is always the same: "targeting Palestinian militants". When is the world going to stop this death machine??

<https://x.com/FranceskAlbs/status/1812159253865545927>

World Health Organisation

WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing – 10 July 2024

... Since the conflict began in October last year, more than 38,000 people have been killed, 88,000 injured, and about 10,000 are missing.

More evacuation orders issued by Israel are further threatening the health of people who have already suffered so much.

The Al Ahli and Patient Friendly hospitals in northern Gaza are the latest that are unable to function because of fighting nearby.

Patients from Al Ahli have been evacuated to the Indonesian Hospital, which is now operating at three times its capacity.

Over 10 000 patients still need medical evacuation for treatment that cannot be provided in Gaza.

Multiple evacuation corridors are needed urgently, to the West Bank, Egypt and Jordan.

And almost the entire population of Gaza now faces high levels of acute food insecurity.

Almost one in four are facing starvation, and another one in three face an emergency level of food shortages that can lead to a high rate of acute malnutrition.

At the same time, very few supplies are getting into Gaza.

Only five WHO trucks were allowed into Gaza last week.

More than 34 trucks are waiting at the Al Arish crossing, and 850 pallets of supplies are awaiting collection. A further 40 trucks are waiting at Ismailiya in Egypt.

WHO calls for the restrictions on supplies entering Gaza to be lifted immediately.

The people of Gaza who have nothing to do with this conflict must not be the ones who pay the price for it. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing---10-july-2024>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill>

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 3 days**

Petitioning against the Holocaust Memorial Bill (closing date 17 July 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>

£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>

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill (closing date 16 August 2024)

https://yourviews.parliament.scot/health/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-bill/consult_view/

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill: Financial Memorandum (closing date 16 August 2024)

https://yourviews.parliament.scot/finance/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland/consult_view/

Gaps in Equality Legislation [Northern Ireland] (closing date 6 September 2024)

<https://consult.nia-yourassembly.org.uk/committee-for-the-executive-office/gaps-in-equality-legislation-inquiry>

Equality and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2025-2028 (closing date 3 October 2024)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/our-strategic-plan-consultation-2025-2028>

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