



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Lords Debate

#### King's Speech: Justice and home affairs

*col 544* **Baroness Gohir (Crossbench)**: ... I turn my attention to hate crime. I was disappointed not to see this in His Majesty's Speech, given that hate crime has been going up for over a decade now. But I shall focus my comments more on Muslim women. Police data actually shows that the vast majority of perpetrators are white males, so I consider this a form of gender-based violence, yet this type of hate crime tends not to be included in violence against women and girls strategies. I urge the Government to consider putting it in.

The Labour manifesto talks about improving the way that Islamophobia is monitored. I welcome that, but what action will the Government take to tackle anti-Muslim prejudice? For example, will they engage with Muslim communities and groups around the country and engage with Muslim women? That is something that the previous Government did not do. Instead, from 2011 they focused on funding one project, Tell MAMA, which is now given £1 million a year even though Muslim communities do not have trust and confidence in that project any more. There are concerns over transparency, governance, how funding is being spent and the quality of the data. ...

I was so concerned that I asked the previous Government 31 questions, which were not answered. ... we need to look into this very deeply and carefully. What are they hiding? Could it be the inflation-busting pay rise of the CEO? That went from £77,000 to £93,000, which is a 21% pay rise.

I urge the Government to review this expenditure of public funding, to talk to Muslim communities around the country and to set up alternative hate-crime reporting hubs within communities. ...

*col 553* **Lord Goodman of Wycombe (Conservative)** [Maiden Speech]: ... I am told that in one's maiden speech, it is customary to introduce oneself to the House, but I prefer instead to introduce my grandfather: Sam Goodman who, family legend has it, was the first Jewish private soldier in the Life Guards. He wrote to his family on 16 December 1916 from the Somme, where he had been dragged from the mud by French soldiers and hauled to safety. The horror and Holocaust of the last century has made a mark on my imagination

in two particular ways. First, I believe that the institutions developed on these islands organically over time have helped to shield us from the worst of some of the suffering endured by our neighbours. Secondly, the crust of civilisation is thin ...

My own path may have diverged from my family's somewhat, but it was an interesting experience, given my background, to be for 10 years the representative ... of the largest number of Muslims in any seat represented by the Conservative Party. ... During those 10 years I acquired a great love of the traditional, classical Islam, one of the world's three great Abrahamic religions. However, those 10 years were not all plain sailing for any of us. I arrived a few months before 9/11, I left a few weeks after an Israeli incursion into Gaza and in between came the Afghanistan and Iraq wars; and terror incidents carried on after I left the House of Commons. ...

**col 554 Lord Patten (Conservative):** ... [Lord Goodman of Wycombe's] maiden speech is evidence of his very deep knowledge of those key issues of social cohesion and community integration, following, as we heard, 10 years as an MP of Jewish heritage representing an awful lot of Muslims. Faith and trust matter to both those heritages very much indeed. Then, much to my surprise and delight, I next saw him when he popped up as an interviewer for my favourite newspaper, the *Catholic Herald*, showing his extreme breadth of interest in these matters. ...

**col 574 Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** ... it is only weeks since we witnessed one of the most chilling examples of out-of-control streets. That was, sadly, in the build-up to the general election. ... To give a few examples: a trembling rabbi, a Conservative candidate, was surrounded by a hostile mob, screamed at and called a snake; a Labour candidate was hounded off the streets to chants of "Zionist devil"; young female leafleteers were harassed and filmed by older men bellowing "genocide" in their faces; tyres were slashed; campaign offices were daubed with blood-red painted anti-Semitic libel, "Zionist child killer". This Islamist sectarianism that has burst into public life and poisoned the democratic process must be confronted, not by laws but by courage. Those who try to silence concerns with the accusation of Islamophobia ignore that many Muslims were themselves threatened with Allah's wrath if they voted for Labour's infidels. We cannot allow this menacing trend to be swept under the carpet ...

**col 578 Lord Mann (Labour):** My Lords, I reference my entry in the register of Members' interests as the Government's independent adviser on anti-Semitism, a role to which the Prime Minister reappointed me yesterday. ...

There is a new form of extremism in this country. It is not recognised across government, it is not recognised structurally and we do not put resource into it. We see extremism in relation to criminality and terror—rightly so. We are rather good at dealing with terrorism and that kind of extremism. We are not perfect and we never will be perfect, and the more resource is allocated to that, the better. That is one form of extremism, but there is what I call the soft belly of extremism as well: people who do not intend to break the law and who are not terrorists but whose entire approach and ideology is to destroy democracy, the system and society that we live in, and who have other aims and objectives. In my work, I am seeing the ongoing targeting of people in the Jewish community who dare not speak out because of what has happened to them, particularly in the workplace, purely because they are Jewish. That is organised, and it is done by extremists. The state does not know how they are organising, where they are organising or who they are because we have no system, unit or resources. It is imperative that government takes hold of this and understands who the people in this country are who wish to destroy our democratic system not by violence but by other means, who we will never catch through criminality and therefore who we will have to deal with in other ways. Critically, we need to know who they are and how they operate.

**col 582 Lord Godson (Conservative):** ... what really matters to the public and what really has changed is the growing incivility of our public life, alluded to by the noble Baroness,

Lady Fox of Buckley, and the noble Lord, Lord Mann ... It is illustrated by the abuse that candidates from all parties, particularly women candidates, endured in the recent general election. ...

The Government's investigation of extremism in the context of the general election campaign certainly has the advantage of specificity, but it is not enough on its own, as implied by the noble Lord, Lord Mann. The Government's approach needs to encompass the wider issues of the spread of destructive ideologies and disinformation, as well as sophisticated and malign authoritarian forces from overseas trying to undermine our country.

As is well known in this House, the noble Lord, Lord Walney, the government commissioner on political violence, has rightly argued that what took place during the election was not a sudden rise in isolated acts of intimidation and harassment but rather, in his own words, a "concerted campaign by extremists to create a hostile atmosphere for MPs within their constituencies to compel them to cave in to political demands".

col/ 583 The noble Lord made a range of practical recommendations to defend our democracy against rising extremism, including the better protection of Parliament and other spaces that serve our democracy, such as constituency offices. I would therefore be grateful for the Minister's early thoughts, in his early days in office, on the recommendations of the noble Lord, Lord Walney.

... I am concerned that the rise of explicitly communalist appeals from campaigning groups such as the so-called Muslim Voice has had too large a part in our deliberations. This was not the only such campaigning body—indeed, hardline Hindutva ideologues have also played their part in this process. ...

col/ 585 **Lord Shamash (Labour):** ... I also congratulate my noble friend Lord Mann on his reappointment as the Government's adviser on anti-Semitism. ...

col/ 593 **Lord Wolfson of Tredegar (Conservative):** ... The Minister referred to what he called the appalling and horrific terrorist attack in the Manchester Arena, which he also called senseless. I am afraid, however, that there are too many people who see in their warped and twisted vision some sense in that sort of attack, and that means our response to terrorism must go beyond merely steps to keep people safe. We must be unyielding against those who commit terrorism, but also those who fund terrorist attacks; those who advocate for them; those who explain them away; those who equivocate about them; or those who fail to assist the authorities in their efforts to thwart them. That means we need to engage with those in all communities—and they are the majority in every community—who support the rule of law and stand against those who seek to subvert it. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-07-24/debates/6C3F5032-5C20-4B49-A20F-2D27E96E3809/King%E2%80%99SSpeech>

*Lord Walney's report and recommendations, referred to above by Lord Godson, can be read at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940\\_HC\\_775\\_Lord\\_Walney\\_Review\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66473eddf34f9b5a56adc9e3/E03131940_HC_775_Lord_Walney_Review_Accessible.pdf)*

## Welsh Senedd

### **Senedd summoned in summer break to choose new First Minister**

The Welsh Parliament has been recalled during its summer break to nominate a new First Minister of Wales, following the resignation of Vaughan Gething MS.

The Senedd will meet on Tuesday 6 August, 2024 at 11:00.

The Llywydd of the Senedd Elin Jones MS, the Presiding Officer, says: "I received a request from the First Minister to recall the Senedd for Members to nominate the next person to take on the role of First Minister of Wales. I have agreed to the request and I

have written to Members of the Senedd to inform them of the recall.”

The Senedd can be recalled during recess, on the authority of the Llywydd, to discuss issues of national significance. In its 25-year history, the Senedd has been recalled previously to discuss the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, Brexit and the future of the steel industry. This is the first time it will meet in recess to nominate a new First Minister. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://senedd.wales/senedd-now/news/senedd-summoned-in-summer-break-to-choose-new-first-minister/>

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## Israel

### House of Commons Oral Answer

#### Prime Minister's Questions

**Mohammad Yasin (Labour)** [900057] I am pleased to see the Government's swift action in officially calling for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, a rapid increase of humanitarian aid into Gaza and the restoration of funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, as well as their commitment to comply with potential International Criminal Court arrest warrants and to recognise a Palestinian state, but too many innocent people are still dying every day. Nowhere in Gaza is safe, so what further pressure can the Prime Minister apply to bring about an urgent ceasefire?

**The Prime Minister:** Both the Foreign Secretary and I have set out the urgent need for a ceasefire to Prime Minister Netanyahu. We want a pathway to a two-state solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. I used my first overseas trip as Prime Minister, particularly at NATO, to raise this subject with world leaders. Under a Labour Government, it will be discussed, negotiated on and fought for at the highest levels on the world stage. The alternative is protesting on street corners. Ultimately, only one of those will deliver change.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-24/debates/0A00C941-B2FA-4CD0-837B-9E8A928FA8DB/Engagements#contribution-85730CEA-0924-4ADF-9D33-8144BE38B8D1>

### House of Commons Library Briefings

**Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Parliamentary reading list (2020-24)**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9873/CBP-9873.pdf>

**Israel-Iran April 2024: UK and international response**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10002/CBP-10002.pdf>

**Iran's influence in the Middle East**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9504/CBP-9504.pdf>

**International affairs and defence: Parliamentary debates and statements in the 2023-24 session**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10039/CBP-10039.pdf>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **USA: Free speech on campus needs to be protected, not attacked, say experts**

Human rights experts ... expressed grave concern at the massive crackdown on pro-Palestinian student protests at various university campuses across the United States of America.

“The banning and attacks on student protests are a grave violation of the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression guaranteed by international human rights law, and must stop immediately,” said the experts, who addressed their concerns to the US government in a previous [communication](#).

Across the United States, students have organised anti-war encampments and peaceful protests to express solidarity with Palestinian civilians in Gaza and to oppose their universities’ affiliations with companies profiting from the conflict and occupation. Many of these encampments have been removed by police upon the request of the university administrations, sometimes with the use of force leading to hospitalisation of protesters. Such actions appear disproportionate and lack legal justification.

Students report facing severe reprisals for their participation in the protests, including summons or arrests, deportation from the United States, expulsion and suspension from their studies, loss of university housing, undue surveillance, inability to graduate and other punitive measures that could significantly impact their liberty, health, education and future careers.

“We urge the academic authorities to ensure that the students are not punished or treated unfairly for exercising their fundamental human rights,” the experts said, calling for those who have been expelled to be readmitted after the summer break.

The United States must ensure that freedom of peaceful assembly is respected, as required by Articles 19 and 21 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), ratified by the United States, and by Article 5 of the [Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#). Limitations need to be legitimate, necessary, and proportionate. Private campuses have a responsibility to respect human rights under the [UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights](#).

“Peaceful protests and rights movements need to be facilitated as part of democratic processes,” they added.

Noting accusations from certain US politicians and university authorities that the protests are antisemitic, the experts strongly rejected these characterisations.

“It is inaccurate and unjustified to bluntly label all peaceful demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian people or calls for a ceasefire in Gaza or criticism of Israel’s policies as antisemitic,” they said. “We strongly denounce antisemitism as a serious form of racial hatred and intolerance and urge authorities to properly investigate and take effective measures against it in line with international human rights law.”

“Political pressure exerted on university administrators and academics to take certain positions and actions regarding these protests is clear interference with academic freedom – a cornerstone of democracy,” the experts said.

They were concerned that the attacks, threats, reprisals, stigmatisation and accusations of antisemitism could have a chilling effect on the diversity of views, affecting academic freedom on campus, in and outside classrooms.

“We call on the government and university administrations to uphold the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and the right to defend rights, in line with international human rights law, and create a safe, enabling environment in which everyone can express their views freely on matters of public interest,” the experts said.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/usa-free-speech-campus-needs-be-protected-not-attacked-say-experts>

## **Israeli authorities must stop targeting Palestinian human rights defenders: Special Rapporteur**

The Israeli authorities continue to target human rights defenders in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through prolonged administrative detention without charge, humiliation and ill treatment, an independent expert said today, calling for an end to such treatment.

“UN Special Procedures experts, including myself, have raised similar concerns multiple times, and this time I want to bring to the attention of the Israeli government the recent cases of Mr. Bassem Tamimi, Mr. Omar al-Khatib, Ms. Baraa Odeh, Ms. Sumoud Mtair and Ms. Diala Ayesh,” said Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

The five human rights defenders were arrested between October 2023 and March 2024, either from their home or as they returned from abroad. They were ordered to be held in administrative detention for periods ranging from four to six months, subject to unlimited renewal. Two of them have yet to be released.

Bassem Tamimi, from Ramallah, is an organiser of peaceful protests against the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands; Omar al-Khatib, from Jerusalem, campaigns against the forced eviction of Palestinian families from the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah; Baraa Odeh, from Bethlehem promotes youth rights; Sumoud Mtair, from Hebron, is active in the Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign; and Diala Ayesh is a human rights lawyer who documents the detention conditions of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israel. All but al-Khatib and Ayesh were released at the end of their administrative detention periods.

“All five human rights defenders were arrested without warrant. They were not given any reason as to why there were being detained. They were all interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. They were not allowed contact with their families,” Lawlor said.

“Four of them were reportedly slapped, beaten, humiliated, sent from one prison to another in the space of one or two days, and made to sign documents in Hebrew they could not understand. The three women detainees have been held in deplorable conditions, in dirty cells and given insufficient and poor-quality meals.”

The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern over the severe deterioration of Tamimi’s health while he was detained. Tamimi suffers from a chronic illness and did not receive all required medication or the specialised diet to manage his illness.

Lawlor said the use of administrative detention with no charge and based on secret evidence that cannot be challenged, as well as delays in, or lack of, access to contact with lawyers and family, all point to the absence of due process rights.

“I call on the Israeli authorities to respect fair trial conditions, or immediately release the remaining two human rights defenders, as well as the dozens of other human rights defenders detained on account of their peaceful activities,” Lawlor said.

She urged the Israeli authorities to ensure that detainees are treated in line with international conventions the country has signed, and in accordance with international declarations that absolutely prohibit any form of ill treatment.

The expert has been in touch with the Israeli Government on this issue.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/israeli-authorities-must-stop-targeting-palestinian-human-rights-defenders>

## **UNICEF**

### **Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on the situation in the Gaza Strip**

With each passing week, children and families face new horrors in the Gaza Strip. The devastating attacks on schools and internally displaced sites continue, reportedly killing hundreds more Palestinians, many of them women and children, and leaving already

overwhelmed hospitals buckling under the strain.

We see children who withstood previous injuries only to be hurt again. Doctors and nurses with no resources, struggling to save lives. Thousands of boys and girls sick, hungry, injured, or separated from their families. The violence and deprivation are leaving permanent scars on their vulnerable bodies and minds. And now, with a breakdown in sanitation and sewage treatment, the polio virus joins the list of threats, especially for the thousands of unvaccinated children.

As families are repeatedly forced to move to escape the immediate violence, the humanitarian situation is beyond catastrophic.

Humanitarian agencies, including UNICEF, are doing everything we can to respond, but the dire situation and attacks against humanitarian personnel continue to obstruct our efforts. Just yesterday, a clearly marked UNICEF vehicle was hit by bullets while waiting at a designated holding point near the Wadi Gaza checkpoint. It was one of two vehicles on the way to pick up five young children to reunite them with their father after their mother was killed. Fortunately, no one was injured, and the team managed to reunite the family. Yet in this incident, like others before it, the humanitarian consequences could have been horrific, for the children we serve, and for our teams.

Simply put - we do not have the necessary conditions in the Gaza Strip for a robust humanitarian response. The flow of aid must be unimpeded and access must be regular and safe.

For almost nine months, aid has trickled into Gaza. Civilians have been deprived of supplies. The commercial sector has been decimated. This has led to growing competition for what little is available, the smuggling of goods into the Gaza Strip, and now the increasingly organized looting of aid supplies. This not only impedes our efforts to reach vulnerable families but puts our teams and the civilians we are supporting at risk.

The challenge is exacerbated by the operating conditions on the ground. At least 278 aid workers in the Gaza Strip have already been killed – a record number – while others are put in harm's way, or prevented from doing their jobs.

We need an immediate improved security environment, including security for aid delivery trucks, to allow aid workers to safely reach the communities they intend to serve.

Most critically, we need an immediate and sustainable ceasefire. We call on all parties to this conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. They must protect civilians and the infrastructure they rely on. This includes ensuring civilians receive the essentials they need to survive – food, water, nutrition treatment, shelter, and health care – through safe and unimpeded humanitarian operations.

It is long past time for this crisis to end, for hostages to be returned to their families and for the children of Gaza to have a healthy and secure future.

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-executive-director-catherine-russell-situation-gaza-strip>

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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

### **Independent review into civil unrest in Leicester 2022** (closing date 5 August 2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/independent-review-into-civil-unrest-in-leicester-2022/independent-review-into-civil-unrest-in-leicester-2022>

### **£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/](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/](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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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438