



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answer

Antisemitism: Education

Fabian Hamilton (Labour) [1194] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of implementing mandatory education on antisemitism in schools.

Catherine McKinnell: The department is committed to tackling antisemitism and all forms of prejudice. Education is a key component of building a fairer and more equal society.

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, there are many opportunities in the existing curriculum for schools to teach about antisemitism, including through:

- Citizenship education, which is compulsory at key stages 3 and 4, and teaches about religious diversity, mutual respect and understanding.
- Relationships education, which is compulsory in all schools, and teaches about the impact of prejudice and the importance of respect.
- Religious education, which is compulsory in all state-funded schools, and educates about religious tolerance.

Young people should be taught the history of the Holocaust. Effective Holocaust education, and learning about other genocides, supports pupils to learn about the possible consequences of antisemitism and other forms of extremism and to help reduce the spread of antisemitism, religious intolerance and other forms of intolerance and extremism.

The department has been supporting greater understanding of the Holocaust by providing funding to the Holocaust Educational Trust to provide the Lessons from Auschwitz programme, and to UCL Centre for Holocaust Education which provides a programme of continuing professional development for teachers.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-23/1194>

Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)

Convictions of Anjem Choudary and Khaled Hussein

Following a six-week trial at Woolwich Crown Court, Anjem Choudary, 57, was found guilty of directing a terrorist organisation, membership of a proscribed organisation and encouraging support for a terrorist organisation on 23 July.

Khaleed Hussein, 29, was also found guilty of membership of a proscribed organisation on the same date.

On 30 July, Choudary was imprisoned for life, with a minimum of 28 years, while Hussein was jailed for five years.

Bethan David, Head of the CPS Counter Terrorism Division, said: "It is clear that both men were members of Al-Muhajiroun and both men had a radical mindset.

"Anjem Choudary was responsible for directing an international terrorist organisation and Hussain provided him support.

"This organisation has been banned in the UK since 2010 because of the danger it poses. Such extremist views are a threat to our society, and I am pleased the jury found him guilty of his crimes."

"The CPS will always seek to prosecute those who support and encourage terrorism."

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/cps-statement-convictions-anjem-choudary-and-khaled-hussein>

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Israel

House of Commons Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Lebanon

col 1201 **The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (David Lammy):** ... On 27 July, Hezbollah launched a series of rockets into northern Israel and the occupied Golan Heights. Tragically, in Majdal Shams, one strike killed at least 12 civilians—young people, one just 10-years-old, who were playing football. I extend my deepest sympathies to their families and to the Jewish community as they grieve for their loved ones. The Government are unequivocal in condemning this horrific attack and calling on Hezbollah to cease its rocket strikes. This atrocity is a consequence of indiscriminate firing and paying no heed at all to civilian life. This attack is part of an intensifying pattern of fighting around the Israeli-Lebanese border. ...

At the end of my first week in office I spoke to Lebanese Prime Minister Mikati, and yesterday I called him again to express my concern at this latest incident. I have also visited Israel and discussed the situation with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Katz. I shall visit Lebanon as soon as the security circumstances allow. We support Israel's right to defend itself in line with international humanitarian law. As I have said before, it is in a tough neighbourhood, threatened by those who want to see its annihilation. More than 40 people, including 24 civilians, have now been killed by Hezbollah strikes in northern Israel and the Golan Heights, and tens of thousands of Israelis have been displaced from the area, while in Lebanon more than 100 civilians have died and almost 100,000 are displaced.

A widening of the conflict is in nobody's interest. Indeed, the consequences could be catastrophic. That is why we continue to press for a diplomatic solution based on UN Security Council resolution 1701, which called for a long-term solution based on the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, no foreign forces in Lebanon without its Government's consent, and no armed forces, other than the UN and the Lebanese

Government troops, deployed south of the Litani river, near the border with Israel. ...

We welcome the Lebanese Government's statement condemning violence against civilians and urging the cessation of all violence. We continue to support the Lebanese armed forces, and the UK has provided more training and equipment to four of Lebanon's land border regiments. ...

With our partners we will do all we can to prevent the outbreak of full-scale conflict, but the risk is rising. I therefore want to underline the Government's advice to British nationals. We advise against all travel to the north of Israel and the north of the Golan Heights, and against all travel to Lebanon. There are frequent artillery exchanges and airstrikes. Tensions are high and the situation could deteriorate rapidly. ...

col 1202 ... if the conflict escalates, the Government cannot guarantee that we will be able to evacuate everybody immediately. People may be forced to shelter in place. History teaches us that in a crisis such as this one, it is far safer to leave while commercial flights are still running, rather than run the risk of becoming trapped in a war zone. My message to British nationals in Lebanon is quite simple: leave. ...

Across the region we see evidence of malign Iranian activity—in their support for Hezbollah, Hamas, Houthis and other groups whose actions destabilise the region, and who show scant regard for the death and destruction that this causes. This Government are committed to working alongside our partners to counter Iranian threats.

Meanwhile, in Gaza, fighting continues. The scenes at the Khadija schools—civilians killed and shocking images of injured children—underline the desperate conditions endured by civilians. The reports of the humanitarian situation remain sobering, with the threat of disease and famine looming ever larger. ... I recently announced new funding for field hospitals run by UK-Med, which has treated more than 60,000 Gazans since the conflict began. We have restored funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, providing £21 million in new funds to the agency that is able to deliver aid at the scale needed.

What is urgently needed is an immediate ceasefire. All the hostages must be freed. The fighting must end, and much, much more aid must get into Gaza. A ceasefire would not only alleviate the suffering in Gaza and secure the hostages' release but reduce tensions across the region, helping to prevent an escalatory cycle in Lebanon, and it would offer hope of renewed peace processes between Israel and Palestinians. ...

Andrew Mitchell (Conservative): ... The tragic and senseless attack in the Golan Heights over the weekend must be met with full, unequivocal condemnation. Children and young people innocently playing football, with bright futures and the rich tapestry of life ahead of them, had their lives cruelly snatched away. ...

col 1203 The risk of further escalation across the blue line is real and the Government are right to take it seriously. We do not want to see a widening of this painful conflict, and the opening of a new front would be in nobody's interest. If we are to avoid it, all involved need to show restraint. We should be crystal clear that that includes Hezbollah. Let nobody forget that this is a proscribed terrorist organisation that has no regard for human life, human dignity or human rights. Nobody should be in any doubt about Hezbollah's intention towards the world's only Jewish state. And Hezbollah supports Hamas, another proscribed terrorist organisation, which has also inflicted appalling suffering, with the worst atrocity committed against Jewish people since the Holocaust and the second world war.

Hezbollah must cease its attacks right now. That message must be aimed at Tehran, too. The Government must use the communication channels that we have with Iran to be extremely firm with the regime. Iran must use its influence to rein in its proxies and stop destabilising the middle east. Beyond stern words, we must use all the tools at our disposal, including tough sanctions, to disrupt malign behaviour by Iran and its proxies such as Hezbollah, and to crack down on finance sources and flows of weapons. Sanctions must also demonstrate that terror group leaders cannot escape the consequences of their actions. ...

If I may press the Foreign Secretary on three specific points, what steps is he taking to amplify the advice that he has already and rightly given so clearly that British nationals in Lebanon should leave now? ... Secondly, does he have an estimate of how many Brits are actually in Lebanon? Thirdly, what discussions has he had with key partners in the region who, like us, wish to see a destabilising escalation averted? ...

We are clearly at a critical point in this conflict. We could see Hamas accept the deal on the table, which would see a pause in the fighting, the return of the hostages, a flood of aid and the space created to bring about the conditions for a sustainable peace, or we could see the suffering in Gaza grind on and a dangerous escalation along the blue line. This is the time to be putting maximum pressure on Hamas, as we have been discussing today, and on Hezbollah.

This is also the time to remain in close dialogue with Israel and maintain our position as a trusted partner. That is critical whether for getting more aid into Gaza, or for urging restraint by Israel. The Foreign Secretary will have heard concerns in recent days about what many of us perceive as a shift in the Government's approach to our close ally Israel, including in relation to the International Criminal Court. ...

col 1204 We should make it clear that, while recognition of Palestine is important and does not need to come at the end of the process, it equally cannot come at the start of the process, where it could be seen as a reward for violence and for terror. I hope that the Government will not only continue to work to avoid an escalation along the blue line, but maintain that close relationship with Israel. The trust and friendship that exist between the UK and Israel matter, because they allow us candidly to discuss all aspects of the current conflict with Israeli counterparts at the very highest levels, in addition to using our influence as a member of the United Nations Security Council.

David Lammy: ... He is absolutely right to draw out the relationship between Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis and Iran. Of course we keep our sanctions regime under review, but he is right to press the case about the axis and he is absolutely right that of course we keep open all the channels that we have with Iran. ...

... we have begun the registration scheme that allows UK nationals to register their presence in Lebanon so that we know where they are. ...

Our estimation is that about 16,000 UK nationals are in the region, but asking people to register enables us to know who is there. We urge people to leave on the many commercial flights that are currently available from Lebanon and to make their way to Europe and back home. ...

Derek Twigg (Labour): ... the Foreign Secretary ... referred to countering the Iranian threats; in his short time in office, has he made any assessment yet about how successful they have been?

David Lammy: We are clear-eyed about the fact that Iran continues to destabilise the middle east through its military, financial and political support for its proxies and partners, including Iranian-aligned militia groups in Iraq and Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. We continue to work with international partners to encourage de-escalation and long-term peace and security in the middle east. ...

col 1205 **Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat):** ... I join him in condemning the Hezbollah strike in the Golan Heights, which killed 12 Druze children. Our thoughts go out to their families.

However, now we find the region on the precipice that many of us have feared since 7 October last year: the escalation of this dire conflict to another front, with Israel's Minister Smotrich warning of an all-out war with Hezbollah. The UN special co-ordinator for the middle east peace process has urged "maximum restraint" and the immediate cessation of rocket fire across the blue line. ... My question to the Foreign Secretary is this: has he, and have his colleagues, engaged with the UN special co-ordinator? ...

The Liberal Democrats welcome the Foreign Secretary's call for an immediate bilateral

ceasefire to end the humanitarian devastation in Gaza, to get the hostages home and to open the door to a two-state solution. ...

David Lammy: ... I have been in touch with the UN special envoy, Amos Hochstein. I have spoken to him several times and I intend to speak to him again over the coming days. ...

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that an immediate ceasefire is what we need. We need those hostages out and we need the aid in. ...

David Pinto-Duschinsky (Labour): ... I welcome the Foreign Secretary's statement on Hezbollah's horrific attack and his condemnation of the awful strike in Majdal Shams. What steps will he take to put maximum pressure on Hezbollah to cease its rocket attacks for good?

David Lammy: We have a long-standing no-contact policy with Hezbollah. However, we of course continue to speak to the Government in Lebanon, as fragile as that Government is. We condemn Hezbollah's destabilising activity. We do, obviously, co-ordinate very closely with regional partners, some of whom are in contact with Hezbollah.

col 1206 **John Hayes (Conservative):** ... I am glad that he has emphasised the close relationship between our Government and armed forces and the Lebanese army. Will he agree to meet a small group of people associated with the all-party parliamentary group for Lebanon ...

David Lammy: ... Of course I will meet the right hon. Gentleman and the group ...

Clive Betts (Labour): ... We must deplore the loss of civilian life, particularly of children, on either side of the divide, so I welcome his calls for de-escalation in Lebanon and repeated calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Looking ahead to long-term peace and to a two-state solution, how does my right hon. Friend deal with the comments of the Israeli Prime Minister, who said the other day that Samaria and Judea are an integral part of Israel and that they are not occupying the west bank? In that situation, have the Government not got to get on with recognising a Palestinian state, rather than waiting for the Israelis to come round to the view that it is acceptable to them?

David Lammy: ... I was horrified by the degree of expansion that I saw in the west bank a few weeks ago: there has been more in the past year than we have seen in 20 years. The violence is unacceptable, and the tone, rhetoric and statements from some members of the Government are very alarming indeed. As my hon. Friend would expect, I pressed these issues with both the Israeli Prime Minister and the Israeli President, and we keep the situation in the west bank under close review.

col 1207 **Brendan O'Hara (SNP):** ... in the immediate aftermath of the Hamas atrocity on 7 October, the international community allowed Israel to blur the vital lines between legitimate self-defence and a lust for revenge. As a result, Israel has acted with impunity, 40,000 civilians are dead and Gaza has been reduced to rubble. What discussions has he had with Israel and our international partners to ensure that—heaven forbid—should this conflict escalate further, all those involved know, understand and accept that revenge and legitimate self-defence are not the same thing under international law, so that we avoid having another 40,000 civilian casualties in nine months' time?

David Lammy: ... given the hostages who are still in Israel [*sic*], Israel has a right to defend itself, but it is a qualified right—it has always been, within international humanitarian law. The scale of civilian loss of life—the children and the women who have lost their lives, the aid workers who have lost their lives—against a backdrop in which journalists are not allowed into the country has been a matter of deep concern and worry across the international community, so of course I have raised these issues. It was also important to meet hostage families and to be absolutely clear that we want to see those hostages returned. ...

Kim Johnson (Labour): ... I am sure my right hon. Friend agrees that the escalation of

violence can be reduced if we look at ending the suffering in Gaza. At a briefing that I attended today with Oxfam and Medical Aid for Palestinians, they talked about how Israel was using water as a weapon of war. People have 4.7 litres of water per day to wash, clean and cook. That is less than a toilet flush. ...

David Lammy: My hon. Friend is right to raise the issue of water. We have waterborne disease—we now have polio setting in—and of course we have had the famine. The lack of desalination is a very serious issue. That is why it was important to take the decision, in our first days in office, to restore aid to UNRWA, to increase the funds available to UK-Med and to do more to open up field medical sites across Gaza. We will continue to press the aid issue in Gaza. I think it is also important that the Rafah crossing be opened, which would alleviate a lot of suffering.

Mike Tapp (Labour): I thank the Foreign Secretary for his calls for de-escalation and a ceasefire, which of course should include the release of all hostages, to ensure that we get more humanitarian aid in and a two-state solution, but we also need to look at the flow of arms, training and finances from the Iranian regime to the terror proxies of Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis, who are working tirelessly to ensure that there is not peace in the region. Does he agree that we should be helping Israel as much as we can to defend itself from these groups and their attacks?

col 1208 **David Lammy:** ... When we look at the scale of rocket fire and missiles and the damage that they are doing, and when we think about these poor people away from their homes in northern Israel, who have been boarded up in hotels for months and months, it is important to have in clear view who is supporting these proxies and the arms and weaponry that is driving a lot of conflict in the region—including by Hamas, by the way. For all those reasons, we keep sanctions under review.

Jeremy Corbyn (Independent): ... Obviously yet more deaths is a tragedy—every mother and every father grieves for lost children, as do all relatives—but there is an issue here: unless the Government and Israel and others accept the International Court of Justice's opinions and judgments about the illegal nature of the occupation of the west bank and Gaza, and of course the illegal nature of the occupation of the Golan heights, we are in danger of the conflict getting much worse. The UN Secretary-General has called for restraint. Will the British Government join him in doing so? Will they also join him in trying to convene some sort of regional peace initiative in order to prevent this whole thing from escalating completely out of control? Finally, do the Government reject the Israeli occupation of the Golan heights?

David Lammy: ... Let me be clear: what I saw and what I continue to see in the occupied territories is unacceptable. He will know that the community who experience this violence in the Golan heights are Druze in background, and that this is occupation of the Golan heights—I do recognise that. I want to see de-escalation across the board and a solution along the lines of Oslo and 1967. A two-state solution is what we all want to get to, and we will achieve that if we have an immediate ceasefire and get back to political dialogue and conversation. ...

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... The attack at the football pitch in Majdal Shams was deadly and full of complete evil: 12 children and young adults were slaughtered. Will he outline what steps are being taken to find the perpetrators and hold them accountable, and to ensure the message is sent that these attacks will not bring peace, but instead further division? What steps will be taken to assist Israel, whose very existence is under threat from Hezbollah? Hezbollah are terrorist murderers of innocents, and must be neutralised.

col 1209 **David Lammy:** ... there will be many people in our Jewish diaspora in this country looking with real fear at the prospect of escalation and worrying about their loved ones. We have updated the travel advice in relation to Israel, particularly northern Israel, and of course we continue to work in partnership with our close ally

at what is a very challenging moment.

Mike Martin (Liberal Democrat): Illegal Israeli settlements are imperilling the future viability of a Palestinian state. They undermine the two-state solution. Will the Secretary of State consider issuing a statement saying that if Israel continues to expand illegal settlements, the UK will immediately recognise the Palestinian state?

David Lammy: I recognise the huge concern in this House and across the world about the nature of both the expansion and the violence. I have also said that recognition is important as a pathway to peace, and no country has a veto on when and how we do that, working with partners. However, I do not think that bringing those two things into proximity is the right way to go about things diplomatically, and I suspect that if we did, we would struggle to find partners that would support us.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/53611A16-AED9-4BA7-B8AB-E3CB28DE0BCA/Lebanon>

UNSCR 1701, referred to above by David Lammy, can be read at
[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701\(2006\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701(2006))

House of Commons Oral Answers

Recognition of Palestine

Paula Barker (Labour) [900135] If [the Minister] will set out a timeline for the potential recognition of a Palestinian state.

Adnan Hussain (Independent) [900137] If [the Minister] will support the immediate recognition of the state of Palestine.

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (David Lammy): We want a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution: a safe, secure Israel alongside a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. We are committed to recognising a Palestinian state as a contribution to a peace process, at a time that is most conducive to that process.

Paula Barker: ... I must press him further on Government recognition of a Palestinian state. That should have been a starting point 30 years ago. I believe that recognition would level the playing field and kick-start the peace process, as has been recognised by so many of our European counterparts. Recognition should not come at the conclusion. What will the Government do if Israel refuses to entertain any moves towards a two-state solution, which it has persistently and vocally rejected?

David Lammy: I know that my hon. Friend has pressed these issues, which are of huge importance to her constituents, for many years. No one has a veto on recognition. As I said, we want it to be part of a process; it does not deliver a two-state solution in and of itself. But it is absolutely right that the Palestinians are enabled to have a sovereign state. It is a just cause, and we will work with other partners to bring that about. ...

Adnan Hussain: I hear what the Secretary of State said, but does he agree that the immediate recognition of the state of Palestine is vital to the UK's commitment to uphold international law and norms, vital to the processes required to bring about an immediate and just peace, and vital to the notion that diplomatic means and not violence are the way to resolve the conflict? Does he agree that failure to recognise the state of Palestine has had and continues to have catastrophic implications for the people of Palestine, as they face what the International Criminal Court has described as plausible genocide?

David Lammy: The hon. Gentleman is right that peace will be achieved through a political solution, not through military means. But I disagree that recognition itself will bring about peace. The Biden plan is on the table at the moment, and we would

like Hamas and the Israeli leadership to accept it. That is what will give us a ceasefire and get us to a place where we can achieve that two-state solution. ...

Andrew Mitchell: ... I urge the Foreign Secretary to avoid any suggestion of some sort of international legal-moral equivalence between a terrorist murderer and the elected head of a democratic state. In any question of an arms embargo, I remind him that just a few weeks ago, British arms and military personnel were defending our ally Israel from missiles launched by Iran.

David Lammy: ... He will know that these are very serious issues, and that the test under criterion 2c is whether there is a "clear risk". That is based on very careful assessments of the law. ...

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat): The Secretary of State will get bored of me continuing to press him on the recognition of the state of Palestine. I hope not to test his patience, but I know in my heart that it is what Palestinians need to ignite hope. Two states cannot happen without that hope to unite Palestinians behind a final cause that will stop the killing for good. War has to stop, but that is not peace. Peace is two states. He knows that Netanyahu rejects it, so when he spoke to Netanyahu, did he talk about the two-state solution, and in particular the recognition of Palestine? Does he accept that if the UK followed the other 140 countries that have done this, that would send a powerful message to both the Palestinian people and Netanyahu?

David Lammy: Let me reassure the hon. Lady that raising this issue does not test my patience. She is absolutely right. I reject and disagree with those in Israel who say that there can be no two-state solution. If there is no two-state solution, there is either one state or no state at all. I recognise why this is a pressing issue and why she raises it, but as I have said, we will do it at the appropriate moment, hopefully working with other partners as a road to the two states that we desire.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/94AC48AD-FDAD-40B5-97CD-E7ABDF2259D0/RecognitionOfPalestine>

Criterion 2c, referred to above, can be read at

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

Gaza: Permanent Ceasefire

Debbie Abrahams (Labour) [900136] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help secure a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy): In my second week in the role I travelled to Israel and to the west bank and called for an immediate ceasefire—something that none of my predecessors had done. In my meetings with both leaders I called for an immediate ceasefire and made the urgent case, as has been described, for a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution.

Debbie Abrahams: ... I thank him for calling for a ceasefire when he visited Israel; that has had a profound impact in my constituency. Does he agree that a permanent ceasefire in Gaza is essential for the future of the people in Gaza, and would help to cool tensions in the middle east, in particular given the attack on the Golan Heights and the escalating tensions between Hezbollah and Israel, and even the Houthis?

David Lammy: My hon. Friend is right. The death and destruction in Gaza is intolerable. The war needs to end now. It is also the case that, given the escalation of tensions in the region, if the Biden plan is adopted by both sides, we would see that escalation come down. For life in Gaza and across the region, it is important that that plan is adopted now.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/0E3640F4-F190-45B2-BD74-A9C5689DC348/GazaPermanentCeasefire>

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

Gordon McKee (Labour) [900138] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Richard Burgon (Labour) [900139] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Deirdre Costigan (Labour) [900140] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Laura Kyrke-Smith (Labour) [900146] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Bambos Charalambous (Labour) [900151] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Ruth Cadbury (Labour) [900159] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Anneliese Dodds): The people of Gaza face a humanitarian catastrophe. Humanitarian aid is a moral necessity. Almost 90% of the population in Gaza have been displaced and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's recent assessment found a risk of famine across the whole of Gaza.

Gordon McKee: ... Last week, I met the Palestinian ambassador to discuss the heartbreaking crisis in Gaza. Since April, the volume of aid cargo entering the Gaza strip has decreased by around 50%, at the same time as hospitals remain damaged or, in many cases, destroyed. That is why I welcome the Foreign Secretary's commitment to resume United Nations Relief and Works Agency funding and his demands for a ceasefire in the region. Having resumed that funding, what steps are the Government taking to allow that vital aid into Gaza and help those so desperately in need?

Anneliese Dodds: ... We are deeply concerned at a number of the developments he mentions. The UK is providing, and will continue to provide, significant humanitarian support to Gaza. However, we are also clear that Israel must meet its commitment to "flood Gaza with aid"—that is vital.

Richard Burgon: I very much welcome the Foreign Secretary's decisions on the International Criminal Court and on UNRWA funding. This morning I met Oxfam, which told me and other Members that, when Parliament is in recess this summer, up to 7,000 people in Gaza will be killed or injured—up to a third of them children. Given that, will the Minister outline what urgent steps the Government will take this summer to end this horror, including ending UK arms sales to Israel?

Anneliese Dodds: Too many people have died in Gaza and too little aid is getting in. We are clear that Israel must take concrete steps to protect civilians and aid workers, in accordance with international humanitarian law. This includes deconfliction between military and humanitarian operations, and supporting the minimum operating requirements of the UN agencies, as well, of course, as the other matters my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary laid out, including the need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

Deirdre Costigan: Last week, I met some of my constituents in Ealing Southall who live in the Hanwell Broadway area. They told me about Hanwell Friends of Sabastiya, a friendship and support network between our corner of west London and a village in the north of the west bank. My constituents have heard at first hand how Palestinians are suffering across the territory. What difference will the decision to restart UNRWA funding make to the lives of ordinary Palestinians, and what discussions has the Minister had with UNRWA's commissioner-general to maximise its impact for the Palestinian people?

Anneliese Dodds: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this matter, because we are clear that UNRWA is the only humanitarian organisation that is able to operate at the scale required in Gaza. The Foreign Secretary, as hon. Members will be aware, confirmed to the House on 19 July that the UK would resume funding

to UNRWA. On the same day, I met UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini to understand more from him about the situation on the ground and the reforms that UNRWA is undertaking. We also talked about this Government's release of £21 million in new funds to UNRWA to support its lifesaving work in Gaza and the provision of basic services in the region.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: My constituents are appalled by the death and destruction in Gaza. They know, as we do, that only an immediate, permanent ceasefire in exchange for the return of the hostages will put an end to this unacceptable and unbearable suffering. In the meantime, despite the Israeli Government's promise to flood Gaza with aid, which the Minister mentioned, the reality is that they are putting in place repeated and deadly obstructions. What conversations have the Government had with Israel to ensure that the Israelis end this denial of lifesaving assistance?

Anneliese Dodds: ... When the Foreign Secretary was in Israel he pressed Prime Minister Netanyahu to open all border crossings, including Rafah, to facilitate a significant increase in aid and to allow its safe, effective distribution within Gaza, and we will continue to press for that as a matter of urgency.

Bambos Charalambous: Despite the designation of Al-Mawasi as a humanitarian safe zone, there have been multiple Israeli air strikes which have killed dozens of civilians and wounded many more, and have resulted in the bombing of a compound belonging to the charities Medical Aid for Palestinians and the International Rescue Committee. What discussions has the Minister had with her Israeli counterpart about stopping any further attacks on Al-Mawasi, where displaced Gazans were ordered to go by the Israel Defence Forces for their own safety?

Anneliese Dodds: ... We are aware that about 90% of the population in Gaza have now been displaced, some of them more than once. We need civilians to be protected, we need aid workers to be treated in accordance with international humanitarian law, and we need to ensure that there is deconfliction. As I said earlier, those are matters on which we, as the new Government, have been pressing.

Ruth Cadbury: The World Health Organisation has warned that the lack of sanitation and clean water caused by the humanitarian crisis in Gaza poses a real risk of polio spreading undetected among its people. Will the UK Government consider supporting a mass vaccination programme in Gaza?

Anneliese Dodds: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this matter, which the Foreign Secretary and I discussed directly with Dr Ghebreyesus, the head of the World Health Organisation, yesterday. My hon. Friend is right about the severe concern about polio and the need for a vaccination scheme, and the World Health Organisation is working on such a scheme. When populations are not receiving the food and nutrition that they require, or clean water, the potential for infectious disease obviously increases, but the UK has provided significant food and nutrition support, as well as shelter and other essential materials. We will continue to do that, and, indeed, to work with the World Health Organisation on these important matters.

Kit Malthouse (Conservative): While the eyes of the world are rightly on the shocking, dystopian situation in Gaza, we should not forget the humanitarian situation in the west bank, where a largely defenceless population are being ever more persecuted and exposed to violence and are seeing their homes and land stolen. May we please have a comprehensive set of sanctions against violent settlers, the organisations that support them in their activities and those who are complicit, at a state level, in what they are doing?

Anneliese Dodds: ... The health and wellbeing of those in the west bank was another of the issues that I discussed with Commissioner-General Lazzarini of UNRWA, because we are concerned about it. As would be expected, we are keeping all sanctions regimes under review, including this one, and we remain

concerned about not only the position of the population but the longer-term issues surrounding a two-state solution, which were mentioned earlier. ...

Greg Smith (Conservative): In recent months, Hamas have targeted Israel's Kerem Shalom goods crossing with rockets and mortars to prolong the misery of their own people. They are also estimated to have spent \$150 million on constructing their terror networks by misappropriating aid. Does the Minister accept that Hamas will always prioritise conflict with Israel over the wellbeing of their own citizens in Gaza, and that more steps need to be taken to stop the misappropriation of aid by Hamas?

Anneliese Dodds: ... Of course, aid materials must always be provided directly to those in need, particularly in a situation of humanitarian catastrophe, which is currently the case in Gaza. It is incredibly important that food and nutrition, clean water, other forms of sanitation, medicines and shelter are provided directly to those in need; it is absolutely fundamental that they must not be misappropriated. Of course, these are issues that we have discussed with UNRWA and other aid agencies that are involved in the region.

Brendan O'Hara (SNP): Key to ending the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is stopping the sale of weapons to those who have shown that they are prepared to use them indiscriminately against civilians. It has been suggested that the Government will continue to sell defensive weapons, but given that Israel defines its entire campaign as "defensive", how do they propose to tell us at the end of the review on international humanitarian law how many of the 40,000 civilians killed were killed with defensive weapons, as opposed to offensive weapons? On what legal basis would such a determination be made?

Anneliese Dodds: The hon. Member will be well aware that this is a legal process and has to be complied with. This Government are absolutely clear that we must act with integrity and ensure that we are following all the legal procedures, as the Foreign Secretary set out last week in the House and has set out this morning.

Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat): As shadow Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State urged David Cameron to publish the FCDO's formal legal advice on whether Israel is breaching international humanitarian law in Gaza. Do the new ministerial team still think there is a compelling case for publishing the Government's legal advice, and will the Government be publishing it?

Anneliese Dodds: ... The Foreign Secretary has been crystal clear that he will be as transparent as he possibly can. He will ensure that Parliament is fully updated on these matters.

Jim Shannon (DUP): ... If we want to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza, it is quite clear what the free world has to do: get rid of Hamas, who are murderers and terrorists. They hide in schools and hospitals, and they hide among civilians. They are the people who are bringing death to Palestine. If we want to give Palestinians the humanitarian aid that we should give them, we have to get rid of Hamas.

Anneliese Dodds: Of course, this Government recognise that Hamas have used civilians as human shields. We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation, and I set out our response to that a few moments ago. We need to ensure that civilians are protected, and we will continue to press for that as a matter of absolute urgency.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/E1EF9936-D901-4982-8406-437D13DBFBE5/GazaHumanitarianSituation>

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification assessment referred to above by Anneliese Dodds can be read at

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Feb_July2024_Special_Brief.pdf

The Foreign Secretary's announcement of 19 July, referred to above by Anneliese Dodds, can be read at

Israel: Compliance with International Law

Tracy Gilbert (Labour) [900148] What [the Minister's] planned timescale is for completing his review of Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law.

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Mr David Lammy): As soon as I came into office, I commissioned new advice on Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law in the context of war in Gaza. We are obliged to look at that advice under criterion 2C for items exported. That is an ongoing process. I pledge to update the House as soon as I can on this very serious matter.

Tracy Gilbert: I welcome the Government's changing approach to the devastating conflict in Gaza and the fact that the review was ordered soon after the Foreign Secretary's appointment. Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that, if the review were to conclude that Israel was breaching international law, all actions including halting arms sales would be considered as part of the Government's proportional response?

David Lammy: Criterion 2C of our strategic export licensing criteria is a clear risk of breach of international humanitarian law. Careful assessments have to be made. There is then a legal process to enable us to reach a conclusion. Of course, with all sobriety and integrity, I intend to do that and I will update the House as soon as I can.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/9ECA0667-A166-4A80-90C2-DA918863F6EA/IsraelComplianceWithInternationalLaw>

Criterion 2C, referred to above, can be read at

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

International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion

Afzal Khan (Labour) [900149] Whether [the Minister] has had discussions with Cabinet colleagues on the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion entitled, "Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem", published on 19 July 2024.

Jeremy Corbyn (Independent) [900153] What assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion entitled, "Legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem", published on 19 July 2024.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Hamish Falconer): We have been clear that the Government must uphold both our domestic and international legal obligations. The UK respects the independence of the ICJ. We received the advisory opinion on 19 July and issued a statement that made it clear that we were considering it carefully before responding. My colleagues on the Front Bench have already made it clear that they oppose the violence from settlers on the west bank, but I am happy to expand on that point, if that is what my hon. Friend and the right hon. Gentleman would like.

Afzal Khan: I thank the Foreign Secretary for showing bold leadership and unequivocal support for international law by dropping the previous Government's opposition to the arrest warrant against Netanyahu. The ICJ's historic advisory opinion earlier this month made it clear that Israel's occupation and annexation of Palestinian territories is unlawful,

an issue on which many of us have campaigned. What steps is the Foreign Secretary taking to ensure that Israel ends its unlawful occupation, which includes the recent expansion of Israeli settlements on the west bank and the annexation of East Jerusalem?

Hamish Falconer: ... The Foreign Secretary visited the region within a week of taking office, and he has also raised those precise issues with the Israeli authorities. I reiterate that we are strongly opposed to the expansion of illegal settlements and rising settler violence. More west bank land has been declared state lands by Israel this year than at any time since the Oslo accords. The British Government already have sanctions against eight people and two groups in relation to settlers in the west bank, and we will look at all options when it comes to tougher action on issues related to the west bank.

Jeremy Corbyn: Can the Minister be clear about this? The judgment or opinion given by the ICJ is, quite clearly, that the occupation of Gaza, the west bank and East Jerusalem is illegal. The settlement policy is illegal. Do the Government accept that view, and if they do, what actions will they take to ensure that appropriate sanctions are taken against Israel, including ending arms supplies, to ensure that that judgment is carried out, and that the people of Palestine can live in peace, and not under occupation?

Hamish Falconer: ... This is an extremely complex finding, covering 90 pages. It was issued after considerable deliberation by the ICJ, and there is a variety of views from the judges. As we said at the time, it will take us some time to respond to the full judgment. We will update the House when we are in a position to do so. In the meantime, sanctions will remain under review, as I mentioned in the previous answer.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/5FBAA1AE-32F4-4213-B952-3AB05882BDDE/InternationalCourtOfJusticeAdvisoryOpinion>

The ICJ Advisory Opinion referred to above can be read at

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>

Topical Questions

Layla Moran (Liberal Democrat): This weekend, we saw an escalation across the UN blue line when Hezbollah and Israel exchanged rocket fire and 12 Druze children tragically lost their lives. One child dying in war is too many, no matter what nationality they may be, but this region is a tinderbox. What is the Foreign Secretary doing to calm the area now that we have seen an escalation, because surely that could be a disaster for the region?

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

(David Lammy): The hon. Lady is right: the situation on the de facto border between Lebanon and Israel is very concerning. We urge all parties to act with caution. The UK condemns the strike in the Golan heights, which has tragically claimed the lives of 12 people. Hezbollah must cease its acts and its destabilising activity. I was pleased to speak to the Prime Minister yesterday, and I will say more on Lebanon in the coming hours.

Ian Byrne (Independent) [900163] On 19 July, the Foreign Secretary stated that half a million people in Gaza are in phase 5 of acute food insecurity, the classification that indicates starvation and famine. UNICEF reports that 29 children have died from malnutrition. How do the Government plan to change that, as Palestinians face the harrowing reality of death by starvation because of a political choice?

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Anneliese Dodds): ... We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza; we have reflected that in our policy response, but also in our humanitarian response. For example, in the statement that the Foreign Secretary

made on his visit to the region, he committed £5.5 million to UK-Med, which is

providing a field hospital on the ground that is desperately needed. We have also ensured that there will be continued provision of the items of medicine, food and nutrition that are required; we will play our part in that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/565475D5-9B65-4320-BF88-BD99B45E94DF/TopicalQuestions#contribution-DD9979FF-5E33-46DA-97CB-3C4182AC7B6F>

Topical Questions

Richard Holden (Conservative) [900166] In quick succession, the new Government have renewed unconditional funding for UNRWA, despite the Hamas links, and endorsed the International Criminal Court's controversial case. Following Hezbollah's attacks at the weekend, will the Government reflect on the step-by-step abandonment of one of our closest allies in the middle east, and the potential impact that could have on continuing, rather than curtailing, conflict and delaying the peace settlement that we all want to see in the middle east?

David Lammy: There is absolutely no abandonment of our close ties and relationship with Israel, and it was hugely important for me to speak to both the Prime Minister and the President to reiterate that. But in reflecting on the work of Madame Colonna and her report—I urge the right hon. Gentleman to read that report and its recommendations—it was also right that we came forward with the funding, like all the rest of our international allies. We did that with an extra £21 million, and I remind the right hon. Gentleman that £1 million of that funding is to ensure that those recommendations are implemented to ensure the neutrality of UNRWA.

Richard Burgon (Labour) [900167] Following the recent rulings by the International Court of Justice, what steps are the Government taking to ensure that Israel complies with its international legal obligations?

David Lammy: My hon. Friend has taken up these issues time and again in the House. Let me make it clear that the expansion we have seen this year is entirely unacceptable—it is more than the last 20 years combined. We are keeping these issues under review and, of course, I raised them with Prime Minister Netanyahu when I saw him in Israel.

Manuela Perteghella (Liberal Democrat) [900168] Will the Government commit to do whatever they can to urgently secure an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, get the hostages home, and re-establish as soon as possible a dedicated peace process to set us on the path to a two-state solution, as raised by many of my hon. Friends today, including my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran)?

David Lammy: I think the hon. Lady speaks for the whole House in the way that she put her comments, and I give her that undertaking.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/565475D5-9B65-4320-BF88-BD99B45E94DF/TopicalQuestions#contribution-57F5B843-0735-45A2-8A7B-739B5EA2D01D>

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

The ICJ Rulings (an Advisory Opinion and three Orders) referred to above can be read at

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>

and

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

and

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240328-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

and

<https://www.ici-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

Topical Questions

Shockat Adam (Independent): I am sure the House will agree that the situation in Gaza, particularly for children, is absolutely horrific, with reports estimating that up to 50,000 children require health-related treatment—and that is not even including conflict-related injuries. Does the Secretary of State agree that, along with international partners, we must secure a mechanism that allows these children to be treated here in the UK, especially as many hospital facilities in Gaza have been erased?

Anneliese Dodds: The issue of medical treatment in Gaza—including, of course, for children—is one that this Government take very seriously. We have reflected that in our operations since coming into office, in particular by supporting UK-Med, which operates a field hospital that the hon. Member may be aware of. As I mentioned earlier, the Foreign Secretary announced £5.5 million towards its operations, which includes covering support for trauma and other forms of public health in Gaza, and we will of course keep this extreme need under review.

Damien Egan (Labour): All of us here want to see an end to the conflict in Gaza and Israel, and that means getting to a lasting peace as soon as possible. There is growing concern that we are seeing rising hostilities in the north of Israel with Hezbollah, with a deadly increase in attacks targeted against civilians. Hezbollah is, of course, an Iranian-funded terror group that has entrenched itself in southern Lebanon. Will the Foreign Secretary reassure us that Britain will play a full part in working with Israel and other allies to counter the threat?

David Lammy: Further escalation is in nobody's interests. I reassure my hon. Friend that we understand who sits behind Hezbollah—that is Iran. It has been engaged in a lot of activity to drive forward escalation in the region, so I of course want to give him that reassurance.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): In Gaza, 111 hostages are unaccounted for. Some are foreign nationals, but most are Israeli citizens. Recently, bodies were recovered from under the city of Khan Yunis, demonstrating that Hamas have complete contempt for humanitarian areas. What action is the Foreign Secretary taking to secure the release of the hostages? Will he guarantee that Hamas will play no further part in the governance of a state of Palestine?

David Lammy: It was very important for me to meet the hostage families when I was in Israel, and I have spoken to hostage families since returning back to the country. We are of course giving all the assistance we can to the Israeli authorities to ensure that the hostages get out. I want the hon. Gentleman to understand that we have this as a No. 1 concern. Those hostages need to be returned.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/565475D5-9B65-4320-BF88-BD99B45E94DF/TopicalQuestions#contribution-7E0CCAD3-05CD-46D3-BC78-BC9021DDF024>

House of Commons Written Answers

Arms Trade: Israel

Chris Law (SNP) [616] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the findings of the Oxfam report of 18 July 2024 entitled Water War Crimes, whether his Department plans to review Government legal advice on arms sales to Israel.

Hamish Falconer: We have been clear that the government must uphold both our domestic and international legal obligations when it comes to arms exports as set out in the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. As soon as the Foreign Secretary took office he commissioned a review of International Humanitarian Law in relation to operations in Gaza. That review process is underway and requires careful consideration. The Foreign Secretary will make public his decision on Israel's compliance as soon as that process is complete.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-18/616>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/10546/621609/1/bp-water-war-crimes-180724-en.pdf>

The Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, referred to above, can be read at

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

Occupied Territories: Armed Conflict

Melanie Ward (Labour) [766] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish risk assessments of the likelihood of atrocity crimes being committed in Gaza and the West Bank that his Department has made in the last 10 months.

Hamish Falconer: It is our policy that any FCDO monitoring and assessment of atrocity risks is confidential and therefore we have no plans to publish. However, we continue to monitor risks closely and will continue to update the House on the ongoing situation in Gaza. We do not have access to the advice provided to the previous Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-18/766>

Hamas: UNRWA

Peter Bedford (Conservative) [1434] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of reports that United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities are being used by Hamas in Gaza.

Hamish Falconer: We are aware of reports of Hamas using healthcare facilities and other infrastructure, such as schools, as bases and command nodes. UNRWA has condemned the use of UN facilities by any party to the conflict for military and fighting purposes. All parties must act in accordance with International Humanitarian Law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-23/1434>

Israel and Occupied Territories: Aid Workers

Brendan O'Hara (SNP) [1677] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has made a recent assessment of the potential implications for his policies of visa restrictions on international aid workers to (a) Israel and (b) the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and whether he has had discussions with his Israeli counterpart on improving humanitarian access to those territories.

Hamish Falconer: During his first visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 14-15 July, the Foreign Secretary pressed Israeli leaders to deliver on their promise to "flood" Gaza with aid. We are concerned at reports of humanitarian agencies being unable to do their jobs because of visa restrictions. We are calling for the full co-operation of Israel with the UN and humanitarian agencies to grant visas and allow for the unfettered access required by humanitarians.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-25/1677>

Occupied Territories: Violence

Jeremy Corbyn (Independent) [1460] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of recent increases in settler violence in the West Bank.

Hamish Falconer: Settlement expansion reached record levels in the past year and has been accompanied by an increase in settler violence. During the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel and the OPTs on 14-15 July, he met with Palestinians displaced in the West Bank and was horrified to hear of acts of violence carried out by settlers.

The Foreign Secretary made the UK's position clear to those communities and to the Israeli Government. Settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

The Government will challenge those who undermine the prospects of a two-state solution or use hateful rhetoric. We will look at all options to take tougher action.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-24/1460>

House of Commons Library Briefings

UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9900/CBP-9900.pdf>

UK and international response to Houthis in the Red Sea 2024

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9930/CBP-9930.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Defence

Regional de-escalation a priority as Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary travel to the Middle East

... The Foreign Secretary and Defence Secretary have arrived in Qatar to drive forward efforts to bring the conflict in Gaza to an end and to press for de-escalation in the region. In a joint visit, the Foreign Secretary David Lammy – in what will be his second trip to the Middle East since becoming Foreign Secretary – and the Defence Secretary John Healey will reiterate the UK's support to Qatar for the country's role in mediating and end to the war in Gaza – including efforts to deliver an immediate ceasefire agreed by both sides.

They will reiterate the UK's calls for de-escalation in the wider region, warning that rising tensions and destabilisation would be in no one's interests. This follows the Foreign Secretary's condemnation of the strikes in the occupied Golan Heights at the weekend which tragically claimed at least twelve lives.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said: Escalation and destabilisation are in no one's interests. It is absolutely vital that we engage closely with partners like Qatar, who play a key role in mediating the conflict in Gaza, so that we can bring this devastating war to an end. ...

Defence Secretary John Healey said: De-escalation must be our primary focus ... The loss of innocent life in recent weeks and months is unbearable. This has to end.

All sides must step back from conflict and step-up diplomacy. We will work with important partners like Qatar as our government leads a renewed push for peace. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regional-de-escalation-a-priority-as-foreign-secretary-and-defence-secretary-travel-to-the-middle-east>

United Nations

The strikes in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon: Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General

We express grave concern over the strikes by the Israel Defense Forces on the densely populated southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, in the evening of 30 July, which resulted in scores of civilian casualties.

As we await further clarity on the circumstances, we again urge the parties to exercise maximum restraint and call on all concerned to avoid any further escalation.

All parties must comply with their obligations under international law.

The parties must urgently recommit to the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and immediately return to a cessation of hostilities.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2024-07-30/note-correspondents-the-strikes-the-southern-suburbs-of-beirut-lebanon>

UNSCR 1701, referred to above, can be read at

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701\(2006\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701(2006))

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN report: Palestinian detainees held arbitrarily and secretly, subjected to torture and mistreatment

The UN Human Rights Office today published a report on arbitrary, prolonged and *incommunicado* detention by Israeli authorities, affecting thousands of Palestinians since last October. The report also covers allegations of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including sexual abuse of women and men.

Since 7 October, thousands of Palestinians - including medical staff, patients and residents fleeing the conflict, as well as captured fighters - have been taken from Gaza to Israel, usually shackled and blindfolded. Thousands more have been detained in the West Bank and Israel. They have generally been held in secret, without being given a reason for their detention, access to a lawyer or effective judicial review, the report states.

At least 53 Palestinian detainees are known to have died in Israeli military facilities and prisons since the horrific attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups against Israeli civilians on 7 October.

The staggering number of men, women, children, doctors, journalists and human rights defenders detained since 7 October, most of them without charge or trial and held in deplorable conditions, along with reports of ill-treatment and torture and violation of due process guarantees, raises serious concerns regarding the arbitrariness and the fundamentally punitive nature of such arrests and detention, said UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk.

“The testimonies gathered by my Office and other entities indicate a range of appalling acts, such as waterboarding and the release of dogs on detainees, amongst other acts, in flagrant violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” he said.

On Monday, the Israeli authorities said they were investigating a number of soldiers for allegedly abusing a Palestinian prisoner earlier this month at the Sde Teiman detention centre in the Negev desert.

In Gaza, mostly men and adolescent boys have been detained. Many have been taken into custody while sheltering in schools, hospitals and residential buildings, or at checkpoints during their displacement from north to south, the report finds.

The Israeli military does not usually explain publicly the basis for taking Palestinians into custody in Gaza, although it has in some cases alleged affiliation with Palestinian armed

groups or their political wings.

Israel has also not provided information regarding the fate or whereabouts of many of those detained, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been denied access to facilities where they are held.

Conditions in military-run detention facilities appear worse, the report states, adding children were among those held, in some cases jointly with adults.

Detainees said they were held in cage-like facilities, stripped naked for prolonged periods, wearing only diapers. Their testimonies told of prolonged blindfolding, deprivation of food, sleep and water, and being subjected to electric shocks and being burnt with cigarettes. Some detainees said dogs were released on them, and others said they were subjected to waterboarding, or that their hands were tied and they were suspended from the ceiling. Some women and men also spoke of sexual and gender-based violence.

Accounts of hostages taken by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups last October also described appalling conditions of captivity, including lack of food, water and poor sanitary conditions, and lack of fresh air and sunlight. Some described being beaten while being taken into Gaza, or seeing other hostages being beaten while in captivity; receiving surgery or stitches without anaesthetic. There were also reports of sexual and gender-based violence in captivity. In addition, the report criticises the Palestinian Authority for continuing to carry out arbitrary detention and torture or other ill-treatment in the West Bank, reportedly principally to suppress criticism and political opposition.

“International humanitarian law protects all those being held, requiring their humane treatment and protection against all acts of violence or threats thereof,” said Türk.

“International law requires that all those deprived of their liberty be treated with humanity and dignity, and it strictly prohibits torture or other ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence. Secret, prolonged *incommunicado* detention may also amount to a form of torture.”

The High Commissioner reiterated his call for the immediate release of all hostages still held in Gaza. All Palestinians arbitrarily detained by Israel must be released. He also called for prompt, thorough, independent, impartial and transparent investigations into all incidents that have led to serious violations of international law; ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and that all victims and their families are provided with their right to remedy and reparations.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/07/un-report-palestinian-detainees-held-arbitrarily-and-secretly-subjected>

Detention in the context of the escalation of hostilities in Gaza (October 2023-June 2024)

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/opt/20240731-Thematic-report-Detention-context-Gaza-hostilities.pdf>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

Iran: Alleged Human Rights Violations

Dan Tomlinson (Labour): As we were tragically reminded again this weekend, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a destructive, malign and terrorist force that is operating through proxies in the middle east, including Hamas and Hezbollah. Will the Minister please update the House on the ongoing work to proscribe the IRGC, which the Conservatives sadly failed to do when they were in government? Will he please also reassure the House that the UK continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel against

the IRGC's continued aggression?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Hamish Falconer): The Government recognise the threat that the IRGC poses, and we will take the necessary measures to counter it at home and abroad. We will keep the list of proscribed terrorist organisations under careful review, but it would not be appropriate to comment on whether an organisation is under consideration at this time. Iran continues to destabilise the middle east through its support for its proxies and partners, and we will work with international partners to challenge that destabilising activity.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-30/debates/FEBD413E-C293-43C7-8BE9-1976B993E455/IranAllegedHumanRightsViolations#contribution-6D3DB34F-A09D-433B-8D3C-78EFEA823C60>

House of Commons Written Answer

Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative) [863] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to recommendation 6 of the Bishop of Truro's Independent Review of FCDO support for persecuted Christians, published in 2019, whether he plans to appoint a Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Stephen Doughty: This Government will champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all abroad. No one should live in fear because of what they do or do not believe in. Envoy roles will be decided upon in due course. In the meantime, we will use the strength of our global diplomatic network, including dedicated staff within the FCDO, to promote and protect FoRB around the world.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-22/863>

The Bishop of Truro's Review, referred to above, can be read at

<https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/storage/2019/07/final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3741>

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 5 days**

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/

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

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