



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### **Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)**

#### **Far-right extremist jailed for running racist websites used by international terrorists**

A man who operated two websites that spread far-right propaganda and encouraged terrorism has been jailed.

Colin McNeil, 46, ran the online sites which featured racist documents, images and videos glorifying Hitler, the Nazis and prominent Neo-Nazis.

The websites also honoured men who committed racist mass killings, including Brenton Tarrant, who murdered 51 people in and around two mosques in Christchurch New Zealand in 2019.

McNeil, from Leeds, did not create the material but provided a platform for it to reach its audience, which included people who were inclined towards terrorism.

One of the people who took inspiration from the material on the websites was 18-year-old Payton Gendron, who went on to murder 10 people in a mass shooting at a grocery shop in Buffalo, USA, in 2022. Prosecution evidence was able to show his engagement with the websites through likes and comments on racist material hosted on them.

McNeil benefited financially from the websites, receiving donations from users, and also used the sites to express his own racist views. ...

McNeil pleaded guilty to four offences of disseminating a terrorist publication at Sheffield Crown Court on April 11, 2024.

At the same court today, he was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. ...

Bethan David, Head of the CPS Counter Terrorism Division, said: "Colin McNeil allowed his websites to operate as propaganda platforms for far-right terrorist material.

"He profited from the sites in the form of donations from users, and it is clear that others were inspired by the hateful and racist material they were able to access online – including those from overseas.

"McNeil's actions were quite deliberate; he knew full well that there was a risk that terrorism would be encouraged and yet he permitted access to such material anyway.

"The CPS will always seek to prosecute those who encourage terrorism when our legal test is met." ...

***To read the full press release see***

## Israel

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### **Gaza: Hamas**

**Peter Bedford (Conservative)** [1435] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of the misappropriation of international aid by Hamas in Gaza.

**Hamish Falconer:** FCDO has systems in place to monitor how UK funding is safeguarded against aid diversion. Measures include rigorous due diligence assessments, thorough and regular risk management assessments, and clauses on preventing aid diversion in our Memoranda of Understandings and agreements with partners. We continuously monitor our programmes and partners, including through annual review processes. We coordinate closely with our partners and any concerns about misappropriation of aid are proactively raised to us.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-23/1435>

#### **Hezbollah**

**Jim Shannon (DUP)** [1496] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on Hezbollah.

**Hamish Falconer:** The situation on the defacto border between Lebanon and Israel is very concerning. A widening of the conflict is in nobody's interest and the Government condemns the strike in the Golan Heights that has tragically claimed at least 12 lives. We have been clear that Hizballah must cease their attacks. Our assessment remains that a strong, sovereign Lebanon with strong state institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, is the best way to tackle Hizballah's influence in Lebanon. The Government continues to press these messages in engagement with counterparts and partners from both Israel and Lebanon, including with Israel's Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Israel on 14 July and during the Foreign Secretary's call with Lebanon's Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, on 29 July.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-24/1496>

### Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

#### **Foreign Secretary: UK calls for de-escalation on the Blue Line**

UK Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, accompanied by Defence Secretary John Healey, ended a one-day visit to Lebanon ...

The Foreign Secretary called for de-escalation along the Blue Line and the need for a diplomatic solution based on UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

The visit comes following the Foreign Secretary's condemnation of the strike in Golan Heights which tragically claimed at least 12 lives and raised deep concerns over the risk of further escalation and destabilisation. ...

Their discussions focused on tensions across the Lebanese southern border with Israel

and the wider situation in the region.

The visit is part of the Foreign Secretary's regional visits over the past month, in which he reiterated the British Government's call for de-escalation in the region, an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the release of hostages and getting humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said: ... I've raised my concerns about the on-going tensions between Lebanon and Israel and have highlighted the UK's determination to avoid miscalculation.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: De-escalation must be our primary focus as this region stands at a crossroads. 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/foreign-secretary-uk-calls-for-de-escalation-on-the-blue-line>

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))

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**Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office** An escalation of violence in the Middle East is in no-one's interest. In Qatar and Lebanon, Foreign Secretary @DavidLammy and Defence Secretary @JohnHealey\_MP call for all parties to agree an immediate ceasefire to bring the conflict in Gaza to an end [plus video]

<https://x.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1819113964380287337>

## Department for Business and Trade

**Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a9ff31ce1fd0da7b593039/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-08-02.pdf>

**Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66aa037ba3c2a28abb50da6c/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-08-02.pdf>

## United Nations

**In call to Iranian Foreign Minister, Guterres underlines need for de-escalation in the Middle East**

Mr. Guterres spoke that morning with the country's acting Foreign Minister, Ali Bagheri. During the conversation, the Secretary-General expressed his deep concern regarding the ongoing situation in the region, " ... He reiterated his public message urging all parties to work towards de-escalation. ...

Journalists asked ... about the UN's response to Iran, Hezbollah and Houthi rebels in Yemen threatening to react to the strikes.

"Our message is that these counterattacks, attacks, counterattacks, attacks and this endless cycle needs to stop," ...

"We need to return to some sort of political negotiations on the various files in the region that are often intertwined in some ways." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1152746>

## UNRWA

### **The Gaza Strip: UNRWA launches “Back to Learning” activities**

Children in the Gaza Strip make up half the population, or over 1 million people. Since the war began in October last year, they have been witnessing what no child should live through. They were forced to flee their homes and have lost loved ones.

“Children in Gaza are traumatized and shocked” said Scott Anderson, UNRWA Director in Gaza. “We are launching the back to learning programme today to help children cope and just be children. It will give them safe spaces to play, learn, grow, re-unite with old friends and make new ones” he added.

In its first phase, UNRWA will expand the ongoing psychosocial support activities, focusing on arts, music and sports – as well as raising awareness on the risks of explosive ordnance. ...

In its second phase, the programme will transition to include informal learning activities, with reading, writing and math lessons. ...

UNRWA plans to provide formal education for children in Gaza as soon as the situation permits. “For this, Gaza urgently needs an immediate, durable ceasefire for the sake of children and their futures.” concluded Anderson. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/news-releases/gaza-strip-unrwa-launches-%E2%80%9Cback-learning%E2%80%9D-activities>

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## Foreign Affairs

### **Initiation Society – Irish Times**

#### **Rabbi accused of coming to Ireland to perform illegal circumcision refused bail**

A London-based rabbi accused of travelling to Ireland to perform an illegal circumcision on a child has been refused bail.

Jonathan Abraham (47) was arrested on Tuesday and appeared before Judge Michael Connellan at Dublin District Court on Thursday charged with carrying out a surgical procedure, circumcision on a male child ... without being a registered medical practitioner.

Det Garda Megan Furey told the judge Mr Abraham made no reply when charged at Blanchardstown Garda station and there were objections to bail due to the seriousness of the case. The detective said the offence, contrary to the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, could result in a maximum fine of €130,000 and five years’ imprisonment.

She said gardaí entered a Dublin 15 property just after 1pm on Tuesday with the homeowners’ consent and observed the accused “dressed in a white robe, a doctor-style coat, with blue gloves and a scalpel in his hand”. The court heard there was a table in the middle of the room with a changing pad, scissors and other medical supplies and implements.

She said gardaí “observed a very young child on the changing pad naked” and established that a circumcision had already been carried out on another child.

Det Garda Furey said a file is being prepared for the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and further charges are expected. She said there were “significant flight risk” fears given Mr Abraham, a father of 10, has no ties to this jurisdiction and is a man of means. ...

The detective agreed that Mr Abraham had not held himself out to be a doctor and she accepted he was a rabbi.

The solicitor said Mr Abraham is a member of the Initiation Society, which governs practice or procedures of the Jewish faith, specifically circumcisions. Mr Van Eeden said his client is a registered mohel, the Hebrew word for someone qualified to perform circumcisions. ... Pleading for bail, Mr Van Eeden said his client is trained to perform circumcisions, had done so for more than 13 years and is insured to do so. Had Mr Abraham performed the same procedures in England, it would have been completely legal, Mr Van Eeden said. However, the judge pointed out that Ireland was a separate jurisdiction.

Judge Connellan refused bail and remanded the accused in custody ...

**To read the full report see**

<https://www.irishtimes.com/crime-law/courts/2024/08/01/rabbi-accused-of-coming-to-ireland-to-perform-illegal-circumcision-refused-bail/>

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## 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 3 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>

#### **\*\* closes in 9 days**

**£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