



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Downing Street

Keir Starmer The rise of antisemitic incidents in the UK is deeply concerning. Jewish people, and all those from faith communities, deserve to feel safe on our streets. I'd like to thank the CST for their action. We will work together to eradicate discrimination of any kind. [plus link to the CST Antisemitic Incidents Report January – June 2024]

https://x.com/Keir_Starmer/status/1821622831198650801

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

David Lammy Appalling figures in this report. We all have a responsibility to stand up to antisemitism and all forms of hatred and racism – there is no place for it in our society. This government is clear that all those who peddle vile hate must face the full force of the law. [plus video and link to the CST Antisemitic Incidents Report January – June 2024]

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1821607313867968622>

Scottish Government

Misinformation, racism and hateful material online: letter to social media companies

Letter from First Minister John Swinney to X, Meta and TikTok about action to combat the spread of misinformation, and to address racist and hateful material on their platforms:

This week I met with representatives of faith and refugees groups to show solidarity with communities around the country. They were clear to me about the impact of social media in spreading misinformation, raising alarm and the sense of threat in their communities. I also met with Scottish political party leaders and Police Scotland representatives to discuss the situation in Scotland and the rest of the UK. Police Scotland described social media posts that contain deliberate misinformation, with provocative and incendiary language with some potentially meeting the threshold for charge under Scotland's hate

crime legislation that came into effect in April this year.

It is clear to me that social media platforms have a duty to take action to ensure that individuals in our society are not subjected to hate and threatening behaviour, and that communities are protected from violent disorder.

I was struck by the communication from Ofcom this week reminding social media companies of their obligation to remove material that incites hatred or violence.

All political parties in Scotland stand together in resisting the prejudice and islamophobia that we have seen on the street in parts of the UK and online.

Everyone has a role in stopping the spread of misinformation. You and your platform have a specific responsibility to do so.

I would therefore be grateful if you could outline the action you are taking to combat the spread of misinformation on your platform and what steps being taken to address racist/hateful speech across your platform. Given the seriousness of the situation action needs to be immediate and decisive.

Police Scotland has specifically raised with me concerns about the time it takes for problematic posts to be removed when these are identified by law enforcement agencies. This increases the risk of spread of malicious content. I would wish to understand the steps you are taking to address this, particularly for content that police identify as illegal or harmful. ...

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/misinformation-racism-and-hateful-material-online-letter-to-social-media-companies/>

Northern Ireland Assembly Debate

Opposition to Racism

12.00 Naomi Long (Justice Minister, Alliance) ... I begin by condemning absolutely and unequivocally the reprehensible events of the past number of weeks ... The actions of a small and violent minority are motivated by a desire to foment hate and division, and it should be highlighted for what it is: fearmongering and intimidation at the highest level.

Let me say clearly that there is no place in our society for the hate, xenophobia, racism and Islamophobia that we have seen on the streets over recent weeks and days. ...

The most recent unrest that we have seen in towns and cities across the UK was, on the face of it, in retaliation to an abhorrent knife attack in Southport. ...

Despite the pleas of the families of those girls for the unrest to stop, their anguish and pain is being exploited by those who are behind the riots. What we are witnessing is a form of radicalisation of people online through disinformation and outright lies propagated by far right and white supremacist elements, both domestic and international ...

There have been suggestions from some that the violence is a result of people with genuine concerns about immigration seeking to protest legitimately. Those demonstrations, as they were advertised, were never intended to be either legitimate or lawful. From the outset, they were intended to intimidate and threaten, to break the law on public processions and to block roads, and I believe that they were intended to create violence and unrest. The call for women and children to stand at the front was, in my view, a clear attempt to use them as human shields when violence started. ...

Some of the people who have been the target of violence in Belfast are only here because they have experienced hardship and abuse in their home country that most of us can barely imagine. They are here to build a better life and to contribute constructively to society. They are here seeking safety, and they deserve to live in peace. Others, however, are long-standing members of our community, many second- and third-generation, who have built businesses, created employment opportunities and provided services to our community for longer than some of the rioters have been alive. We need to ask ourselves honestly as a society: how long before someone is accepted as being part of our

community? How many generations need to have passed before they are fully accepted and welcomed? If they continue to be othered because of the colour of their skin, their religion or their ethnicity, then let us be clear that that is racism, it is xenophobia, and it is Islamophobia. That is not and can never be legitimate, and we need to work collectively, as political leaders, to combat it. ...

12.15 Brian Kingston (DUP): ... The Democratic Unionist Party unequivocally condemns the violence and wanton destruction that has been witnessed on the streets of Belfast and elsewhere in recent days. Our message to those who are responsible for organising, taking part in or inciting that disorder is simple: stop, and stop now. ...

No one should have to live in fear because of where they were born, the colour of their skin or their religious beliefs. The targeting of homes, businesses and places of worship, including our mosques, is and always has been absolutely wrong. ...

Northern Ireland has a proud history of welcoming those who seek better lives for themselves and their families and who have enriched our communities socially and economically. That will not change. ...

However, if we want to get to the root of the problem, all need to recognise that individuals have the right to lawfully express those concerns, including through engaging in peaceful protest. However, it is clear to me that some people are pushing those issues to direct anger specifically at foreign nationals who are living in our community. That is disgraceful. ...

We also recognise that the majority of those who participated in protests last weekend did so without malicious intent and took part in no criminality. Many of those protests did not make the news. We are disappointed that some parties have labelled all participants as racists or fascists. However, we also fully accept that with fundamental freedoms comes responsibility. I implore anyone who is thinking of joining a public demonstration in the coming days to think carefully about whether their attendance could give succour to the criminal elements who wish to undermine the rule of law. ...

Deirdre Hargey (Sinn Féin): I absolutely condemn and abhor the vile Islamophobic and racist attacks that have occurred in my constituency ... The scenes of racist violence, destruction, thuggery and intimidation are disgusting and are not reflective of the Belfast that I know and love. ...

Lessons can be learned from the policing operation, and mistakes must not be repeated. The priority must be to protect people and property and face down racism, violence and intimidation. However, those responsible for what happened over the past number of days are the individuals and groups who whipped up hate online and then came out onto our streets to cause havoc and mayhem, fuelled by Islamophobia and racist hate. Those people must now be held accountable for their actions and face the full force of the law. There can be no place for racism, hatred, discrimination or intimidation anywhere in our society. ...

12.30 Steve Aiken (UUP): ... We have people in our community who have come here to help, yet some very misguided people think, in some way, that it is appropriate to attack them. It is not. It has to stop, and it has to stop now. The fact that, across all of Northern Ireland, we increasingly rely on our friends from overseas who come to Northern Ireland to help us make it a much better place is something that all of us as politicians should be welcoming. ...

Finally, an additional issue that I would like to raise is that of anti-Semitism. In many ways, anti-Semitism is the canary in the coal mine for many of the issues that we have had. A year and a half ago, I spoke in the synagogue about concerns of anti-Semitism rising across Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland and about the impact that that was likely to have. There is no space in Northern Ireland for anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia or anything else. As politicians, we all must call people out for them. I would like to see an emphasis on anti-Semitism put alongside the other forms of horrific racism.

Matthew O'Toole (SDLP): ... First, we need to ensure that there is a robust policing response. It is clear that members of ethnic minority communities, and specifically the Muslim community, have real and profound questions about the policing of Saturday's events. It is also clear that there has been a gradual erosion of confidence among members of the Muslim community in the ability of the police to deal with hate crime. Some of that is clearly happening in the context of depleted resources, but it means that the policing response needs to be robust and immediate, and prosecutions need to be swift. ... Secondly, we need robust action from the Executive. ... we need to see clear, deliverable actions in the coming weeks and months and before the end of the mandate. First, we need — finally — an updated racial equality strategy. ... We also need stand-alone hate crime legislation ...

In closing, I say to the Muslim community and the wider minority community in Northern Ireland not just that we are with you but that you are us. You are part of us, you will continue to be part of us, we will defend you and we will support you. ...

Emma Sheerin (Sinn Féin): ... It is important that we do so to send a strong message that we are united against hatred, racism and Islamophobia and that love and hope will prevail over hate. It is important that we send a message to the racist thugs who have attempted to destroy parts of our community over recent days and weeks that we will not tolerate it, that what they are doing is wrong and that it must stop. It is racist, sectarian and Islamophobic ...

To our ethnic minority communities, I say that we support you, we stand with you and we defend your right to a life free from intimidation and discrimination. We see your fear and send solidarity to you. We value you. We see the part that you play in our society. You are a part of our society, and we want it to stay that way. You make our society a better place, and you are a part of us. Those who incited the violence will not win. People who have been responsible for criminal behaviour in recent days must be held to account by the PSNI and our justice system. ...

Discrimination has no place in our society. No one is born with hate in their heart; it exists and grows only through ignorance and fear and by allowing misinformation to win. When those who know better do not challenge it or call it out, they become compliant in allowing a narrative that is wrong to win out. We therefore have a responsibility as leaders in our areas to stand together against it and call it out. ...

Paula Bradshaw (Alliance): ... There are people who have chosen to make Northern Ireland their home and to contribute to this society who now feel hurt, fearful and isolated. They need reassurance, and we are here today to provide them with that support, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or community background. I support Steve Aiken's point about adding anti-Semitism, because hate is hate. ...

This is a moment for cohesion in the Chamber and for us to speak with a common voice. ... We are saying today that if you attack one member of our community, regardless of their creed or colour, you attack all members of our community, and it is on that basis that we will start rebuilding.

12.45 Elizabeth Kimmins (Sinn Féin): ... The very least that people from minority ethnic communities deserve is respect and to have the same safety and security as any other individual across this island. ... Our communities have embraced and welcomed many people from other communities over the years, just as many of our people were welcomed when they emigrated to countries across the world. ...

Racism and hatred are never acceptable — no ifs, no buts and, most importantly, no excuses.

Sinéad McLaughlin (Sinn Féin): ... The scenes of racist attacks, wanton destruction and outright hatred have been appalling, disturbing and plainly wrong. Last weekend, we saw nothing short of an explosion of hate on our streets. It has shaken us all. ...

Over the past week, far right agitators have sought to cruelly and criminally exploit people,

often our teenagers, for their own racist ends. Those agitators have shown the worst of our society. They have shown the dark underbelly of the racist and fascist attitudes that still exist. They made me embarrassed and ashamed, not just because those elements still exist but because this is 2024 and we still have a society where those kinds of attitudes are allowed to fester and grow and where too many people still point to desperate people who come across on boats and dinghies as being the enemy. ...

In the face of this violence, many people are rightly asking themselves what kind of society we are building for the next generation. It is also important to say today that our society cannot be one where this kind of behaviour is allowed to proceed or go unpunished or where attitudes remain unchanged, nor can it be one where we appeal to criminal gangs to use their influence to bring down tempers or quell racist incidents. ...

... unfortunately, I also know that, as shocked as many were by the events of recent days, there are others, particularly from our minority communities, who were less shocked because they have seen such pervasive and perverse hate before. They see it in their daily lives, and they are less shocked because they know that the views that fuel the hate have, for many years now, been given credence and credibility by Governments, particularly across the water, that are more interested in stunts than solutions. ...

As a society and as political leaders, we will all have a job of work to do to deal with the root causes of racism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. Everywhere that we find them, we need to call them out. ...

Timothy Gaston (Traditional Unionist Voice): ... I strongly condemn the violence that we have seen in recent days. ... the destruction of property and physical attacks on people have no place in Northern Ireland, and they never have. Those responsible need to be brought to justice regardless of the label that they do it under or the organisation from which they stem. ...

I have come to the conclusion that one of the main problems that people such as me have with condemning the violence in this place alongside some of those who condemn the violence in this place is the structures that exist here. The First Minister has said that there was no alternative to the IRA campaign. Let me remind the House what that means. It means that there was no alternative to the murder of Thomas Niedermayer, a German industrialist who brought employment to Belfast, only to be abducted, murdered and buried face down in a dump by the Provisional IRA. ... You cannot say, out of one side of your mouth, that the violence directed at immigrants in recent days is wrong whilst defending, out of the other side of your mouth, the murder of a migrant who brought jobs to west Belfast. ...

I hear regularly from people who see that violence has worked for others in Northern Ireland and who now believe that it is the only way in which to make others sit up and take notice of their concerns. ...

I welcome the statement from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner, Ms Donna Jones, who said: *"the only way to stem the tide of violent disorder is to acknowledge what is causing it."* She went on to say: *"The government must acknowledge what is causing this civil unrest in order to prevent it. Arresting people, or creating violent disorder units, is treating the symptom and not the cause."*

Honeyed words from the House, spoken while ignoring the problems, will not make the issue go away. The people who have legitimate concerns are fathers, mothers and grandparents. It is simply wrong to brand them as being far right, as many have tried to do. ...

1.00 Gerard Carroll (People Before Profit Alliance): ... The far right forces behind those attacks are in the minority, and countless people here are determined to stamp out racism, Islamophobia and bigotry of any kind. The scenes that we have seen in recent days have been abhorrent. Certainly, based on the experience of the weekend, things could have been a lot worse, had we not had an organised anti-racist response to those who wanted to divide us. When a small far right mob gathered at the City Hall on Saturday, it was met

with thousands of anti-racist campaigners. I pay credit to every campaigner who took a stand then and who is taking a stand against the hate of the far right. ...

The violence witnessed in recent days did not occur in a vacuum. The far right has been emboldened by the racism of those in power who want to scapegoat migrants for their own failings. ...

Racism, however, does not stem from working-class communities. It is a top-down ideology that is created and fuelled by government policy. ...

We have the Executive's failure to bring forward a racial equality strategy, and yet people in this House wonder whether we have a racism problem. Political choices that either ignore or pander to racism have led us to where we are today, and, even now, after all the racist violence, there are elected representatives who still continue to give succour to far right thugs who have loyalist paramilitaries in their ranks. They say, "These people have legitimate concerns". Let me say this: there is nothing legitimate about the racism, Islamophobia and hate of those who have coordinated and organised these attacks. ...

I also offer a severe word of caution about the subsequent police response. Young people who are incited to riot by loyalist paramilitaries do not need to be fired at with lethal plastic bullets, which should be banned. If the state wants to deal with rioting, it should deal with the paramilitary and far right leaders who are orchestrating and organising this violence. ...

We need a mass anti-racism movement so that we can reclaim our streets and isolate the far right. We need working-class people to unite against racism in their communities, workplaces and everywhere that it raises its ugly head. Stand up against racism. Do not give it any quarter or truck. Solidarity.

Claire Sugden (Independent): It sends an important message that we have come together as an Assembly to unequivocally condemn the behaviour, which has been motivated by racism, that we are watching unfold in Belfast and across the United Kingdom. ...

I will say this to those who are rioting and being abusive: do not dare to claim that it is for anyone but yourself. I say to those who are being targeted: I am so sorry that living here has made you feel scared, intimidated and unsafe. ... I am horrified and ashamed that this behaviour is being associated with my home and yours. I say to immigrants that ethnic minorities are not a community apart. You are our community. You are the doctors in our hospitals, the businesses that have provided jobs, the colour and culture that have enriched our lives, and the people who are doing the targeting can claim only to live here. ...

Let us all be very clear. The motivation for riots — they are not protests — criminal damage and intimidation is racism. Those who are leading them are racists. Their *raison d'être* is to whitewash our community. If you tell me that you are not a racist, do not try to justify the behaviour. Stop the whataboutery and stop standing with them. ...

It means nothing that the Union flag is joined with the Irish flag as a symbol of this behaviour. If anything, it justifies nothing and desecrates both. A criminal is a criminal, regardless of the flag that they fly. Setting aside sectarianism for racism is neither novel nor something to be proud of. Paramilitaries do not exist for a cause or because they are concerned about you. It is entirely about them, whether that is selling drugs, making money or other forms of criminality. ...

Michelle O'Neill (The First Minister): ... I welcome the fact that the Assembly has convened today and that we are very strongly united in standing firmly against the racism, violence and intimidation that we have witnessed over the past few days. ...

Racism is a stain on our society. There is a no to racism: there is no place for it in our society. There is no excuse, no rationale, no justification: racism is wrong in every single form. ...

I want to speak directly to those who are inciting hatred in our society today. We see you, we reject you, and we reject your attitudes and actions. To those who are involved in violence and intimidation and in causing chaos and destruction, I say this: you will be dealt

with by the full force of the law. To those who are targeting our minority communities, I say this: stop now, because you do not speak for us, and you will never speak for us. ...

Make no mistake about it: last week's activity and the activity — I call it activity, but it is criminality — that we have witnessed over recent days was nothing more than raw racism, and it has to be addressed with a zero tolerance approach. ...

The Executive will continue to implement the racial equality strategy 2015-2025, but, as Members have indicated, we need to work towards moving to the next stage of that. ...

The strategy itself acknowledges: "*We should be under no illusion about the size of the challenge involved in tackling racial inequalities.*" and that it: "*will require time, effort and resources*" to be put in that direction.

It also recognises that each and every one of us has responsibility for playing our part in combating racism and racial inequalities by embracing the diversity that undoubtedly contributes to building a more vibrant, shared and equal society.

1.15 Full implementation requires the support of everybody out there: all of us and all partners. I acknowledge all that has been done by the voluntary and community organisations that work to combat racism, not just in weeks like this, at these horrendous times, but all year round, day in and day out. ...

The Chief Constable was at the Executive meeting this morning. We talked about the situation that is unfolding. We also talked about the shared priority to tackle and push back against racism and to take a zero tolerance approach to intimidation and violence and push that back. ...

People who have been displaced represent some of the most vulnerable in our society. We all have a responsibility to challenge prejudice and intimidation wherever we see it. ...

Those people bring with them a rich diversity of culture, along with new ideas and approaches. Diversity will always have that strength. ...

We will, of course, continue all our efforts across government and in wider society to tackle racism and inequality in all their forms, which have been brought into sharp focus over the course of recent days. ...

I started by speaking to those who are involved in criminal activity and in violence and intimidation, so let me finish by speaking to those people from an ethnic minority background who have been impacted on by the events of recent days, and not just recent days, as it is an underbelly in our society that we need to tackle. We say to you that your political leaders say no to racism. We say to you that your political leaders say no to intolerance and hate. We say yes to an inclusive society and yes to diversity. We say to you that you are our brothers and our sisters. We say to you that you are our community. We say to you that we are one community. Working with every person who has been elected to the House, I am determined to do everything that I can to build that better society, to choose hope over fear and to ensure that every child here has the best opportunity to flourish. We say no to this malevolent, violent activity, and we say no to racism. ...

Jonathan Buckley (DUP): ... I express my sympathy to the families of Elsie, aged seven, Alice, aged nine, and Bebe, aged six, who were so callously murdered in Southport. The violent scenes across the United Kingdom in the aftermath of those horrendous murders do nothing to honour their memory. Such actions are illegal, reckless and counterproductive to the vital discussions that we need to have about our country's immigration policies. ...

The additional strain — I emphasise the word "additional" — on public services such as housing, school places and council services cannot be ignored. ... Members, the mother who has concerns about getting her child a school place is not far right or racist. The 25-year-old who cannot get housing in his local community is not far right or racist. The elderly citizen who is angered that their winter fuel payment has been taken from them whilst £80 million a day is being spent to house asylum seekers in hotels is not racist or far right ... To label them as such is a mischaracterisation and stifles the constructive dialogue and

alienates a large section of the population who have legitimate concerns. ...

Kate Nicholl (Alliance): ... First, I thank members of the Muslim community for their presence here today, for their resilience and for their dignity. ... I acknowledge the fear that they and those from minority ethnic communities are living through. That should be our focus, and you have been let down. Collectively, we need to do better. ...

Thankfully, there are ways out of here, but we will need to grow together. As a first step, we must agree that the violence on our streets is unacceptable. We wholeheartedly condemn it, and those responsible must feel the full weight of the law. ... Secondly, we need to name the problem. Those businesses that were attacked were owned by Muslims. The end point of the riots was the Belfast Islamic Centre. There is no ambiguity here. The unrest was powered by racism and Islamophobia ...

1.30 We need to focus on how we listen to the voices of those who have been impacted on. Not one of us who has spoken today has their lived experience. Those who are in fear need to be safe and protected, and we must be visible to them and guided by their needs. ... Tackling inequality is not easy. We have an insufficient Budget and crises everywhere you look. Housing, poverty, health and education all need to be fixed. ...

I feel very uncomfortable with the insistence of some beginning their remarks by stating that there are legitimate concerns. I will read what the Victims' Commissioner said, which was: *"So-called 'legitimate concerns' are never acknowledged when we have condemned examples of sectarian hate crime, sexual assault or street violence in the past. It should therefore play no part in our messaging when we condemn violence against victims who are non-white."* ...

There is a right to peaceful protest, and there are people who have concerns. Those points are true. However, there is no right to incitement. While it may not be your intention, the result of qualifying your condemnation is to make those who are being targeted feel that politicians are prioritising the perpetrators over the victims. Legitimate concerns do not validate illegitimate protest. ...

I acknowledge that, while the intent of the riots was rooted in racism, not all those who attended them were racist. Too many in our society, from every walk of life, are struggling. ...

Decades of deliberate misinformation will be hard to untangle. Across the world, there is a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment. Those with nothing are pitted against each other by those with everything. ... Here is where we have to say, "This is misinformation." We have a moral duty to address the lies that people are being told and the manipulation ...

Our diversity makes us richer, and we need to tap into the warmth and empathy that our people possess in volumes. That empathy and compassion are sometimes hard to access because of poverty and the failure of our public services to meet their needs, but those are two separate conversations. We are here today talking about racist crime and Islamophobia. We will have another conversation about housing. ...

I will finish by reading the words of Muhammad Atif, who is from the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association. ...

"We must reflect on the message that we are sending to our children. What kind of society do we want them to inherit? Is it one where division and intolerance thrive or one that celebrates diversity and unity? We have witnessed failures from authorities and politicians in adequately protecting Muslim and immigrant communities, and now they have the opportunity to correct that. It is imperative that today, you send a resounding message of solidarity that we stand united against racism, Islamophobia and discrimination in all forms. We urge every citizen of Northern Ireland to embrace our diversity and recognise it as a strength. Together, let us build a future where everyone, regardless of their background, skin colour and religious beliefs, feels valued and safe. The time is now to affirm our commitment to inclusively, making Northern Ireland a welcoming home for all."

He asks: *"Will you promise me this? Will you promise this to yourself? Will you promise this to our next generations?"* ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/08/08&docID=408498#4480720>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Israel: International Law

Chris Law (SNP) [1506] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will publish his Department's legal advice on Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law.

Hamish Falconer: The Foreign Secretary has committed to being transparent when making decisions on IHL assessments. As soon as the Foreign Secretary took office, he commissioned new advice on Israel's compliance with IHL, in the context of the war in Gaza. This decision on IHL, and the Government's decision on the related issue of arms exports, will be made public when the process is complete.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-24/1506>

House of Lords Written Answers

UNRWA: Finance

Baroness Altmann (Conservative) [HL289] To ask His Majesty's Government what safeguards they have in place to ensure that restoration of funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees will not result in UK funding being used to directly or indirectly benefit Hamas.

Lord Collins of Highbury: When the Foreign Secretary announced the resumption of funding on 19 July 2024, he said that UNRWA has taken serious action in response to the appalling allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel. The government is confident that UNRWA is taking action to ensure it meets the highest standards of neutrality and is strengthening its procedures. £1 million of the £21 million of new UK funding will be earmarked to support UNRWA implement the management reforms recommended by the Colonna review. Together with other donors, we will continue to monitor UNRWA's progress on implementation of its action plan. The FCDO will also continue to conduct our own annual assessment of UK funding to UNRWA.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-24/hl289>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-19/debates/CEEB9B68-0D16-45BD-85E3-AA2F02F415DE/IsraelAndGaza#contribution-7C03A336-9D74-412B-AB60-6625EC6B7641>

Israel: Palestinians

The Lord Bishop of Gloucester [HL295] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take in response to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued on 19 July regarding (1) Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, and (2) its discriminatory laws and policies against Palestinians.

Lord Collins of Highbury: We have received the Advisory Opinion issued by the

International Court of Justice on Friday 19 July and are considering it carefully before responding. The UK respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. The government is absolutely clear on the fundamental importance of the international rule of law.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-24/hl295>

The 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>

Downing Street

PM call with President El-Sisi of Egypt

... Turning to the situation in the Middle East, the leaders shared their deep concern over the potential for escalation in the region and the importance of restraint.

The Prime Minister reiterated the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the return of hostages and more humanitarian aid to be delivered across Gaza. He underscored the UK's commitment to a two-state solution through a peace process. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-el-sisi-of-egypt-8-august-2024>

UNICEF

Statement by UNICEF Regional Director Adele Khodr on the impact of the recent violence and attacks in the Middle East on children

Children in many countries in the Middle East are facing a harsh reality today more than ever before – life shrouded by uncertainty and violence.

“The surge in violence and attacks has permeated several countries of the region in recent months, taking a shocking toll on children’s lives.

“With almost every report of an attack, comes news of children among those killed. In less than a year, thousands of children have been killed across the State of Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and the occupied Golan Heights.

“Beyond those tragic deaths, there are many more boys and girls suffering from injuries that have forever marked their bodies. and caused immeasurable damage to their mental health. Many have lost their homes as a result of displacement and are living in a constant state of uncertainty and fear.

“But the situation for children threatens to get far, far worse. Any escalation in violence in the region will lead to severe humanitarian consequences, endangering the lives and well-being of many more children. It will also have long-lasting effects on the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East. Immediate de-escalation is essential to safeguard the lives and well-being of children, as the alternative is unconscionable.

“UNICEF continues to call on all parties to urgently exercise maximum restraint and protect civilians and the critical services they rely on for their survival, in line with their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. Children have a right to be protected from violence and this should always be upheld.

“UNICEF remains on the ground, collaborating with partners to provide essential services and supplies to support and protect children in the region. However, what children truly need is peace and security, the opportunity for a life lived in dignity and free from deprivation and fear. That starts with de-escalation, a lasting political solution, and the promise of a brighter future.

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/statement-unicef-regional-director-adele-khodr-impact-recent-violence-and-attacks>

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 2 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>

**** closes in 7 days**

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/

**** closes in 7 days**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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