



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Other Relevant Information

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Israel

Downing Street

PM call with President Pezeshkian of Iran: 12 August 2024

... The Prime Minister said that he was deeply concerned by the situation in the region and called on all parties to de-escalate and avoid further regional confrontation.

There was a serious risk of miscalculation and now was the time for calm and careful consideration, the Prime Minister said.

He called on Iran to refrain from attacking Israel, adding that war was not in anyone's interests.

The Prime Minister underlined his commitment to an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages and increasing humanitarian aid to Gaza. He added the focus should be on diplomatic negotiations, to achieve those outcomes.

The Prime Minister also raised the cases of foreign detainees in Iran, adding that it was vital that they received the necessary medical care.

The leaders agreed that a constructive dialogue between the UK and Iran was in both countries' interests. The Prime Minister added that could only be furthered if Iran ceased its destabilising actions including threats against individuals in the UK and did not further aid Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-pezeshkian-of-iran-12-august-2024>

Joint statement on the Middle East: 12 August 2024

We, the leaders of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, welcome the tireless work of our partners in Qatar, Egypt and the United States towards an agreement on a ceasefire and the release of hostages. We endorse the joint statement of HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, President Sisi and President Biden calling for the immediate resumption of negotiations. We agree that there can be no further delay. We have been working with all parties to prevent escalation and will spare no effort to reduce tensions and find a path to stability. The fighting must end now, and all hostages still detained by Hamas must be

released. The people of Gaza need urgent and unfettered delivery and distribution of aid. We are deeply concerned by the heightened tensions in the region, and united in our commitment to de-escalation and regional stability. In this context, and in particular, we call on Iran and its allies to refrain from attacks that would further escalate regional tensions and jeopardise the opportunity to agree a ceasefire and the release of hostages. They will bear responsibility for actions that jeopardise this opportunity for peace and stability. No country or nation stands to gain from a further escalation in the Middle East.

President Emmanuel Macron of France

Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany

Prime Minister Keir Starmer of the United Kingdom

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-the-middle-east-12-august-2024>

Joint Statement from the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy on the Middle East

We, the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy discussed the situation in the Middle East. We expressed our full support for ongoing efforts to de-escalate tensions and reach a ceasefire and hostage release deal in Gaza. We endorsed the joint call from President Biden, President Sisi of Egypt, and Amir Tamim of Qatar to renew talks later this week with an aim to concluding the deal as soon as possible, and stressed there is no further time to lose. All parties must live up to their responsibilities.

In addition, unfettered delivery and distribution of aid is needed. We expressed our support for the defense of Israel against Iranian aggression and against attacks by Iran-backed terrorist groups. We called on Iran to stand down its ongoing threats of a military attack against Israel and discussed the serious consequences for regional security should such an attack take place.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-from-the-united-states-united-kingdom-france-germany-and-italy-on-the-middle-east>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

David Lammy This is a critical moment for stability in the Middle East. Prime Minister of Lebanon @Najib_Mikati and I spoke again about the need for all parties to urgently and immediately de-escalate. There can be no more delays, the fighting must stop now.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1823316232080126040>

Church of Scotland

Church writes to Foreign Secretary on Israel-Gaza war

... The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has called on members of the Church to pray for peace in the conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas and in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah, and has instructed us to urge the UK Government:

- to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza;
- to cease granting export licences for the sale of armaments to Israel;
- to reinstate funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); and
- to recognise without delay the State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel, as a contribution to securing lasting peace and justice for all.

We were glad that during your first visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

in July, you called for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, and a rapid increase of humanitarian aid into Gaza. We were also glad that on the 19th of July you announced that the UK would restart funding to UNRWA.

However, we believe that there should be a clear reference to a permanent ceasefire in your ongoing discussions, in order to stop the suffering of the people of Gaza, and to help avert the very real fear of a wider regional war. This permanent ceasefire should also be agreed to by Hamas. There is still time for Israel to change course, but that needs pressure from the UK Government in collaboration with other countries. We also firmly believe that a ceasefire will enable the hostages currently held in Gaza to be released. ...

We were very disappointed to read last week that the UK Government has put off a decision on suspending arms export licences to Israel, despite initially being in favour of doing so. It is clear from the recent International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that Israel has violated international law in Gaza and in the West Bank. Whilst it is understood that UK companies provide only a small amount of the total number of arms to Israel, it still makes them complicit in Israel's ongoing violations of international law. We call on the UK Government to immediately suspend arms export licences to Israel.

During your visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, you made the urgent case for a credible and irreversible pathway towards a two-state solution. We ask, however, that the UK Government goes further and recognises the State of Palestine, thus bringing the UK in line with the other 145 countries around the world who have done so. ...

To read the letter in full see

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/articles/church-writes-to-foreign-secretary-on-israel-gaza-war>

The Foreign Secretary's 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>

The ICJ ruling (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>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) [HL404] To ask His Majesty's Government following Canada's decision to proscribe the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, whether they also plan to proscribe it; and if so, when.

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government will keep the list of proscribed organisations under close review, as we seek to protect the UK from the threats that we face. However, we will not routinely comment on whether an organisation is or is not being considered for proscription.

The Government is clear that Iran's malign activity, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the UK. The UK already maintains sanctions on over 400 Iranian individuals and entities covering human rights abuses and nuclear proliferation, including sanctioning the IRGC in its entirety. The Government will continue to consider what further steps may be taken to deter Iran's malign activity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-29/hl404>

TOP

Other Relevant Information

United Nations

Secretary-General, in Observance Message, Urges Greater Action by Governments, Digital Platforms, Political Leaders to End Violence Based on Religion, Beliefs

... Around the world, individuals and communities face violence based on religion or beliefs. We must urgently combat this scourge.

Governments must protect all people and places of worship, implement comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, and invest in education initiatives that foster inclusion and equal rights. Digital platforms must enforce content-moderation policies that align with international human rights standards.

Political and religious leaders must unequivocally condemn hate speech, advance dialogue and make clear that violence can never be an answer. We must work together to stem the tide of hatred and promote tolerance, mutual understanding and respect.

Today, as we honour and remember the victims, let us reaffirm our commitment to creating a world where everyone, regardless of their religion or beliefs, can live free from fear, stigma and persecution.

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22332.doc.htm>

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>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 3 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 3 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>

TOP

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438