



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy

We, the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy, strongly support the ongoing mediation efforts by the United States, Egypt and Qatar to conclude the agreement for a ceasefire and the release of hostages and are encouraged by the constructive approach adopted so far.

We welcome the fact that technical work will continue over the coming days, including on both the humanitarian provisions and the specific arrangements relating to hostages and detainees, and that senior officials will then reconvene before the end of next week with the aim of concluding the agreement.

We urge all parties to continue to engage positively and flexibly in this process. We underline the importance of avoiding any escalatory action in the region which would undermine the prospect for peace. There is too much at stake.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-by-the-foreign-ministers-of-the-united-kingdom-france-germany-and-italy>

Joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of France and the United Kingdom

We, the Foreign Ministers of France and the UK, share a common interest in the security of the State of Israel and the stability of the region as a whole. We are in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on the first joint UK-France ministerial visit for a decade. As two UNSC permanent members, we have a specific responsibility to support ending the current escalation and securing a lasting peace to the benefit of Israelis, Palestinians and the whole region.

The risk of wider conflict in the Middle East has never been higher and we must push for de-escalation now. We have urged Iran and its proxies to stand down the ongoing threats of military attack against Israel. We have also stressed to all parties that the spiral of escalating reprisals must end. We reiterate the importance of fully implementing UN Security Resolution 1701 on Lebanon.

We stress our full support for the current efforts to reach a ceasefire and hostage release deal in Gaza led by the US, Egypt and Qatar. There is no further time to lose to seize the opportunity and secure the release of the hostages. We strongly urge all parties to live up to their responsibilities. In addition, unfettered delivery and distribution of humanitarian aid is urgently needed, and civilians must be protected.

We reiterate that only a two-state solution, within the framework of international law, can bring a just and lasting peace to both Israelis and Palestinians. We strongly condemn settler violence in the West Bank which threatens both Israeli and Palestinian security and could put at risk ongoing diplomatic efforts. We remain committed to supporting cooperation and normalization in the region. All actors in the region must make concrete gestures if they genuinely want to avoid war. We stand ready to engage with them to that end.

This joint visit is a symbol of the UK and France's shared purpose in the region and wider world.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-by-the-foreign-ministers-of-france-and-the-united-kingdom>

It's never too late for peace in the Middle East – we must break the cycle of violence: David Lammy and Stéphane Séjourné write for The Observer on how a ceasefire could enable progress towards a two-state solution – the only long-term route to safety and security

This is a perilous moment in the Middle East. Israel's actions in Gaza continue to lead to intolerable loss of civilian life. Hostages taken by Hamas terrorists remain in chains, 316 days since the 7 October attack. There are French and British citizens among them.

Fighting between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah has intensified. Iranian threats of further escalation mean the risks of a full-scale regional war are rising. ...

One miscalculation, and the situation risks spiralling into an even deeper and more intractable conflict. ...

Our response is to reconnect – using the joint strengths of our diplomacy to press a common message. ... By making the first joint visit by a British and French foreign minister for well over a decade, we are showing our commitment to working ever more closely together in a new spirit of cooperation, in the interests of our national security, Europe's security and the Middle East's security. ...

The UK and France are united behind a common set of messages which we delivered to Israelis and Palestinians, including in meetings with Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz, and the Palestinian Authority's prime minister, Mohammad Mustafa. As UN security council permanent members, we share not only a common interest, but a common responsibility to play our part in the security of Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the stability of the region as a whole.

All sides should focus on the recently restarted negotiations on a ceasefire and hostage deal in Gaza. These talks offer a vital opportunity to secure an immediate ceasefire that ends the horrendous conflict in Gaza. A route to securing the release of all the hostages still cruelly held by Hamas. And a pathway to restoring stability to a region already under immense suffering and facing the prospect of far worse.

Our visit to a Palestine Red Crescent Society warehouse was a stark reminder of the toll of this conflict, which is unacceptable. Without progress towards a ceasefire, this will only worsen. ...

It's never too late for peace. An all-out conflict across the region is in nobody's interests. All parties need to show restraint and invest in diplomacy. Any Iranian attack would have devastating consequences, not least in undermining current Gaza ceasefire negotiations ...

And our engagement reinforces our conviction that urgently securing such a deal is in the interests of Israelis, Palestinians and the wider region. Only a deal can relieve civilian suffering. Only a deal can restore communities' sense of security. Only a deal can open up the space for progress towards a two-state solution – the only long-term route to safety, security and dignity for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

There can be no delays or excuses. ...

Only a political solution can deliver the peace we so desperately need. That's why we want not just a ceasefire in Gaza but why we are urging Israel, Hezbollah and Lebanon to engage with the US-led discussions to resolve their tensions diplomatically, based on the principles set out by UN security council resolution 1701.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/its-never-too-late-for-peace-in-the-middle-east-we-must-break-the-cycle-of-violence>

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))

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office “We must focus on the possibility of peace.” French and UK Foreign Ministers have travelled to Israel and the OPTs, for urgent talks on de-escalation. @Steph_Sejourne and @DavidLammy [plus video]

<https://x.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1824827808545489399>

David Lammy Only with diplomacy can we end the current cycle of violence in the Middle East and bring lasting peace. @Steph_Sejourne and I met Israeli Foreign Minister @Israel_Katz and Palestinian Authority PM Mustafa, in the first joint UK-France Ministerial visit in over 10 years. [plus photos]

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1824500858760921254>

David Lammy There can be no delays or excuses. All parties must engage seriously in negotiations on a ceasefire deal. This is a vital opportunity to secure the release of hostages and an immediate surge in aid into Gaza.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1824509477644546504>

European Commission

Josep Borrell Fontelles We condemn settlers attacks in Jit, aimed at terrorising Palestinian civilians. Day after day, in an almost total impunity, Israeli settlers fuel violence in the occupied West Bank, contributing to endanger any chance of peace.

<https://x.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1824393486499451105>

Josep Borrell Fontelles The Israeli government must stop these unacceptable actions immediately.. I confirm my intention to table a proposal for EU sanctions against violent settlers' enablers, including some Israeli government's members.

<https://x.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1824393489628492004>

World Health Organisation

Humanitarian pauses vital for critical polio vaccination campaign in the Gaza Strip

Two rounds of a polio vaccination campaign are expected to be launched at the end of

August and September 2024 across the Gaza Strip to prevent the spread of circulating variant type 2 poliovirus (cVDPV2).

WHO and UNICEF request all parties to the conflict to implement humanitarian pauses in the Gaza Strip for seven days to allow for two rounds of vaccination campaigns to take place. These pauses in fighting would allow children and families to safely reach health facilities and community outreach workers to get to children who cannot access health facilities for polio vaccination. Without the humanitarian pauses, the delivery of the campaign will not be possible. ...

Over 1.6 million doses of nOPV2, which is used to stop cVDPV2 transmission, will be delivered to the Gaza Strip. The deliveries of the vaccines and the cold chain equipment are expected to transit through Ben Gurion Airport before arriving in the Gaza Strip by the end of August. ...

Detailed plans to support vaccinators and social mobilizers to reach eligible children across the Gaza Strip have been finalized. Vaccination will be administered by 708 teams, including at hospitals, field hospitals, and primary health care centres in each municipality of the Gaza Strip. Around 2700 health workers, including mobile teams and community outreach workers, will support the delivery of both rounds of the campaign. This will be supported by awareness-raising efforts to mitigate the risks of polio infection.

At least 95 per cent vaccination coverage during each round of the campaign is needed to prevent the spread of polio and reduce the risk of its re-emergence, given the severely disrupted health, water and sanitation systems in the Gaza Strip. ...

The Gaza Strip has been polio-free for the last 25 years. Its reemergence, which the humanitarian community has warned about for the last ten months, represents yet another threat to the children in the Gaza Strip and neighbouring countries. A ceasefire is the only way to ensure public health security in the Gaza Strip and the region.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.who.int/news/item/16-08-2024-humanitarian-pauses-vital-for-critical-polio-vaccination-campaign-in-the-gaza-strip>

United Nations

Secretary-General's press encounter - on polio in Gaza

Gaza is in a humanitarian freefall.

Just when it seems the situation could not get worse for Palestinians in Gaza, the suffering grows – and the world watches.

In recent weeks, the poliovirus has been detected in wastewater samples in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah.

That means the virus is now circulating, with hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza at risk.

Polio does not care about dividing lines – and polio does not wait.

Preventing and containing the spread of polio will take a massive, coordinated and urgent effort.

The United Nations is poised to launch a vital polio vaccine campaign in Gaza for more than [640,000] children under the age of 10.

The World Health Organization has approved the release of 1.6 million doses of the polio vaccine.

UNICEF is coordinating delivery of the vaccines and the cold chain equipment to store them.

And UNRWA, the largest primary healthcare provider in Gaza, has medical teams ready to administer the vaccines and assist with logistics.

But the challenges are grave.

Health, water, and sanitation systems in Gaza have been decimated.

The majority of hospitals and primary care facilities are not functional.

People are constantly on the run for safety.

And routine immunizations have been severely disrupted by the conflict, increasing the spread of other preventable diseases like measles and hepatitis A.

We know how an effective polio vaccination campaign must be administered.

Given the wholesale devastation in Gaza, at least 95 per cent vaccination coverage will be needed during each round of the two-round campaign to prevent polio's spread and reduce its emergence.

The vaccination effort will include 708 teams at hospitals and primary health care centres – many of which are barely functioning -- and by 316 community outreach teams throughout Gaza.

And we also know what a successful campaign will require:

The facilitation of transport for vaccines and cold chain equipment at every step.

The entry of polio experts into Gaza.

Fuel for health teams to conduct their work.

Reliable internet and phone services to inform communities about the campaign.

An increase in the amount of cash allowed into Gaza to pay health workers.

And, above all, a successful polio vaccination campaign needs safety.

Safety for health workers to do their jobs.

Safety for children and families to get to the health facilities.

And safety for those health facilities to be protected from bombardment.

I am appealing to all parties to provide concrete assurances right away guaranteeing humanitarian pauses for the campaign.

Let's be clear: The ultimate vaccine for polio is peace and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

But in any case, a Polio Pause is a must.

It is impossible to conduct a polio vaccination campaign with war raging all over.

Polio goes beyond politics.

It transcends all divisions.

And so it is our shared obligation to come together.

To mobilize – not to fight people, but to fight polio.

And to defeat a vicious virus that, left unchecked, would have a disastrous effect not only for Palestinian children in Gaza, but also in neighbouring countries and the region.

Thank you.

Q: When do you want this humanitarian pause for polio to begin?

SG: First of all, ideally, we need a ceasefire. In a situation in which a ceasefire is not in place, there is a plan. For the implementation of that plan, we need a pause and that needs of course an agreement between the parties.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2024-08-16/secretary-generals-press-encounter-polio-gaza-scroll-down-for-arabic-version>

UN rights office calls for accountability for latest 'horrific' West Bank killing

The perpetrators of a deadly rampage targeting a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank must face justice to deter future attacks, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, insisted on Friday.

Echoing widespread condemnation internationally and within Israel of the attack reportedly by Israeli settlers on the village of Jit on Thursday which left a Palestinian man dead and about a dozen injured, OHCHR spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani described the incident as "horrific".

She noted that the killing "was not an isolated attack", in reference to years of violence directed at Palestinian communities by Israeli settlers, maintaining that it was "the direct

consequence” of Israel’s policy of occupation.

“We have been reporting for the past years about settlers attacking Palestinian communities in their land in the West Bank with impunity and this really is the crux of the matter, the impunity that the perpetrators of such actions have been enjoying,” Ms. Shamdasani said.

According to latest OHCHR monitoring, 609 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank including East Jerusalem since Hamas-led terror attacks on Israel on 7 October.

This number includes 146 children, eight women and at least four people with disabilities.

“Clearly this needs to stop and key to this will be accountability for the perpetrators,” ...

“There have been very few investigations but even in those cases, most of the times these do not conclude with justice for the victims and for the perpetrators. There are reports of Israeli security forces standing by as attacks take place. There are even reports of weapons being distributed to the settlers. So, there is clearly a State responsibility in this regard.

Meanwhile in Gaza ... As mediators prepared to meet for a second day in Doha to push for a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of all hostages abducted on 7 October, UN aid teams warned that Gazans continue to suffer debilitating aid shortages.

“Hostilities and recurrent evacuations orders are driving a seemingly endless cycle of displacement and making it increasingly difficult for people to access the humanitarian assistance they need to survive after 10 months of war,” said the UN aid coordination office, OCHA ...

Echoing reports that the relatives of Gazans killed in the war have been unable to give them appropriate burial, OCHA noted that grieving families “have no time to mourn, as they are themselves facing death, pain, hunger and thirst on a daily basis. Each day has been described as being a struggle to simply survive.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153251>

UNICEF

Humanitarian Situation Report: State of Palestine

<https://www.unicef.org/sop/media/4146/file/UNICEF%20State%20of%20Palestine%20Escalation%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%2029,%2031%20July%202024.pdf.pdf>

Humanitarian Outcomes

Aid Worker Security Report

https://humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/figures_at_a_glance_2024.pdf

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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

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