



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Downing Street

PM call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel

The Prime Minister started by expressing his sincere condolences to the Israeli people and the loved ones of the six hostages recovered in Gaza this morning, including British national Nadav Popplewell.

The leaders discussed diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire and the release of hostages, and the Prime Minister welcomed Israel's support for the American 'bridging proposal' and emphasised the need to move quickly.

Regional de-escalation was in everyone's interests, as the impact of miscalculation would come at great costs for all sides, the leaders agreed.

The UK was steadfast in its support for Israel's right to self defence, and would continue to work with partners to uphold regional security, the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister also urged Prime Minister Netanyahu to ensure greater access to detainees held by Israel, the increased delivery of aid to Gaza and to ensure international law was upheld at all times.

The leaders agreed to stay in close touch.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-20-august-2024>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Gaza has become the deadliest place in the world to be a child: UK statement at the UN Security Council

Gaza has become the deadliest place in the world to be a child. Women and children continue to bear the brunt of this brutal conflict that since October 7 has killed over 40,000 people. Children account for nearly a third of identified casualties. We call on Israel to take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties.

Over 100 innocent hostages remain captured by Hamas in Gaza. Time is running out for them as they remain in captivity subject to unimaginable horror. We call again for their

immediate and unconditional release.

President, we've heard today that Gaza is on the brink of a devastating polio outbreak. Another deadly threat to a people already facing a multitude of deadly threats: ongoing bombardment, risk of famine and dire sanitary conditions. Meanwhile regional tensions remain high – any attack by Iran would have devastating consequences.

Urgent action is needed, on three fronts:

First, we need an immediate ceasefire. All sides need to focus on the negotiations led by the US, Egypt, and Qatar. These talks offer a vital opportunity to secure an immediate ceasefire that ends the conflict, gets the hostages out, allows urgent access to aid and de-escalates regional tensions.

We also urge Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah and other Iranian-aligned militia groups to stand down the ongoing threats of military escalation against Israel. All parties need to exercise restraint, as my Prime Minister has made clear in recent weeks.

Second, Gaza stands on the precipice of a polio outbreak with over 640,000 children under the age of 10 in need of vaccinations. We call on the parties to continue cooperating with the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, and partners to facilitate vaccine rollouts.

Israel needs to allow safe and unhindered aid access into and across Gaza and to put in place an effective deconfliction mechanism to ensure aid and vaccines can be delivered and administered safely.

Israel's ramping up of new evacuation orders is causing chaos in Gaza. The humanitarian zone, now just covering 11% of Gaza, is chronically overcrowded with people desperately seeking shelter. It is not safe and it is still receiving fire.

British NGO, UK Med, reports that just last night their residential compound in a humanitarian zone was damaged by Israeli shelling.

Humanitarian actors are being forced to evacuate their offices and abandon warehouses full of aid. If this does not stop, a polio vaccine rollout may become impossible. All parties must comply with their obligations under International Humanitarian Law.

Third, President, settler violence in the West Bank is inexcusable. The violence in the Palestinian village of Jit last week was abhorrent. We call on Israel to take action against these extremists. The UK has sanctioned eight individuals and two entities related to settler violence.

We condemn the continued expansion of settlements in the West Bank – it is a clear violation of international law.

Finally, President, my Foreign Secretary and French Foreign Minister Sejourne visited Israel and the OPTs last week. They conveyed three key messages: that the current ceasefire talks were the only way to avert a full regional crisis; that the humanitarian situation was catastrophic and we needed to see immediate improvements; and that there had to be accountability for the appalling settler violence in the West Bank. I hope that we can all unite around these three messages today.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/gaza-has-become-the-deadliest-place-in-the-world-to-be-a-child-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

David Lammy An immediate end to the fighting in Gaza and the release of all hostages is vital. I spoke with @SecBlinken today to discuss ongoing ceasefire negotiations. The UK and US are working in lockstep to bring all parties to an agreement.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1825980491717292260>

David Lammy My thoughts are with the family of British-Israeli citizen Nadav Popplewell, whose body was recovered from Gaza. This has been a deeply distressing ordeal for his family. I continue to press for the release of all hostages - there can be no further delays.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1825955242598609137>

Hamish Falconer I met with the families of those still cruelly being held hostage in Gaza. I heard about the terrible ordeal they continue to go through, worsening each day. We are clear in our call - Hamas must release all hostages immediately.

<https://x.com/HFalconerMP/status/1825823277266202740>

Department for Business and Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c5a2c3057d859c0e8fa895/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-08-22.pdf>

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66c5a45367dbaeb97a13e559/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-08-22.pdf>

Scottish Parliament Motion

Patrick Harvie (Green) [S6M-14131] Scottish Government Meeting with the Deputy Ambassador of Israel – That the Parliament is concerned by the recent reported discussion between the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture and the Deputy Ambassador of the State of Israel regarding "areas of mutual interest", including energy and culture; notes that this discussion took place more than 300 days into what it sees as Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza, and subsequent to the ruling of the International Court of Justice, which, it understands, concluded that Israel is guilty of apartheid, racial segregation, illegal occupation and other crimes under the Geneva Conventions; recognises that the Scottish Government has apologised for the nature of this meeting and confirmed that it has no intention of developing closer ties to the State of Israel, and calls on it to issue clear public sector guidance to ensure that any companies complicit in illegal settlements or in the supply of arms to the State of Israel are excluded from grants and other forms of public support to the greatest extent legally possible.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-14131>

Scottish Government

Meeting with Israeli Diplomat: Angus Robertson gives update.

Following a meeting with the Israeli UK Deputy Ambassador, External Affairs Secretary Angus Robertson said: "Two weeks ago, I met the new Israeli UK Deputy Ambassador at their request.

"We anticipated the Deputy Ambassador would raise concerns about antisemitism, as well as other issues.

"It was rightly for me to decide whether to take the meeting, however, as is normal practice, the First Minister was made aware before the meeting happened.

"My view was that given the Israeli UK Deputy Ambassador had requested a meeting it was an opportunity to express the Scottish Government's clear and unwavering position on the need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and I did exactly that.

"No one intended that this meeting be presented as legitimatising the actions of the Israeli government in Gaza. The Scottish Government has been consistent in our unequivocal condemnation of the atrocities we have witnessed in Gaza.

"The reality, however, is that this meeting has been taken by many to represent a

normalisation of relations between the Israeli and Scottish Governments.

“As such, it is clear that it would have been better to ensure that the meeting was strictly limited to the need for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the appalling loss of life in the region. I apologise for the fact that this did not happen.

“Going forward, it is clear that, having now spoken direct to the Israeli Government and making them aware of our position on an immediate ceasefire, it would not be appropriate to accept any invitation for a further meeting.

“This will remain our position until such time as real progress has been made towards peace, unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance is provided and Israel cooperates fully with its international obligations on the investigation of genocide and war crimes.

“The Scottish Government does not support any normalisation of its relations with the Israeli Government during this period.

“The Scottish Government will never hold back in expressing support for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all hostages, an end to UK arms being sent to Israel, and the recognition of a sovereign Palestinian state within a two-state solution.”

<https://www.gov.scot/news/meeting-with-israeli-diplomat/>

First Minister Today, First Minister @JohnSwinney spoke virtually with the Head of @PalMissionUK, Dr @HZomlot, about the current situation in Palestine. They discussed @ScotGov's support for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the humanitarian crisis, and the safe return of all hostages.

“As First Minister of Scotland, I will never hold back in expressing support for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all hostages, and the recognition of a sovereign and viable Palestinian state within a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace alongside one another.”

<https://x.com/ScotGovFM/status/1826284224451862865>

United Nations

Gaza: Latest evacuation orders leave civilians dangerously close to frontline

“Continuous” Israeli military evacuation orders in Gaza threaten already extremely vulnerable people in the enclave with further forced displacement, raising concerns that vital services could soon be cut off, UN humanitarian workers warned ...

It does feel like people are waiting for death,” [said](#) Louise Wateridge, spokesperson for the UN agency for Palestine refugees, in an online message on X.

“Areas that were (in) the humanitarian zone are now the frontline,” she told *UN News*, noting also that Gazans “are never more than a few blocks away from the frontline now”. ... According to the UN agency for Palestine refugees, UNRWA, these new evacuation orders now cover approximately 84 per cent of the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, many Gazans are being forced to move yet again. ...

... the emergency, the UN aid coordination office, OCHA ... reported that parts of Salah ad Din road – a crucial passage for humanitarian missions from south to north – were caught up in an evacuation order by the Israeli authorities issued on Saturday for Deir Al-Balah.

“This has made it nearly impossible for aid workers to move along this key route,” it noted. ...

Gaza’s coastal road “is not a viable alternative” anymore, OCHA continued, explaining that the beaches along this route are “crowded with makeshift shelters” for Palestinians forcibly uprooted from their homes.

“As a result, convoy movements along the coastal road are extremely slow, and critical

supplies and services – such as water trucking – are not reaching people in need at anywhere near the scale required,” the UN aid office warned.

In Khan Younis, where Israeli tanks have returned, UNRWA expressed growing concerns that key facilities in areas of the southern city slated for evacuation may soon be damaged or destroyed.

These include the just-restored water pumping station that serves some 100,000 people, the UNRWA Japanese Health Centre that re-opened last month and is slated to play a key role in the upcoming polio vaccination campaign and the Khan Younis Training Centre, a large facility now used as a warehouse to store humanitarian supplies.

“Without that warehouse, we cannot bring aid in and put it anywhere,” explained Ms. Wateridge. “There are no warehouses left.” ...

Meanwhile, UN aid coordination office OCHA [reports](#) that on average, at least one Palestinian has been killed every day so far this month by Israeli airstrikes in the occupied West Bank. Since October, airstrikes there have killed 128 Palestinians – including more than two dozen children.

As of Monday, OCHA says more than 600 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since October – the vast majority by Israeli forces, and at least 11 by Israeli settlers. During the same period, 15 Israelis were killed by Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

OCHA has also recorded some 1,270 attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians over the past 10 months, causing deaths and injuries, as well as damage to property.

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153406>

Gaza: Vital aid supplies running low as schools hit in further strikes

[UN aid teams have warned](#) that vital chlorine supplies that are essential for purifying water are running out and deteriorating in Gaza, while humanitarians condemned new strikes on schools sheltering people displaced by the war.

There are enough chlorine reserves to last just one month, said the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, while double the amount of purifying solution needs to be used to be effective now.

Children are particularly at risk of waterborne diseases and the danger is set to rise during the winter months if Gazans continue to be forced to live in overcrowded shelters lacking adequate water and sanitation facilities, OCHA noted.

The UN agency added that acute shortages of soap for handwashing, laundry powder/liquid and shampoo, and a lack of disinfectants, continue to allow diseases to spread easily.

“Even when these products are available in the market, people cannot afford them,” OCHA said, adding that many Gazans now rely on water trucking operations, with 22 partners now distributing more than 7,000 cubic metres of water daily to 775 registered locations.

In a related development, humanitarians condemned another strike on a UN school in Gaza City whose blast could be seen from more than 12 kilometres away.

The strike on Wednesday was the third time that the school has been hit, after strikes in December and July, according to the UN agency for Palestine refugees, UNRWA, which runs the facility. ...

“Yet again, people looking for safety have only been able to find death and destruction. Schools and other civilian infrastructure must never be used by any party to the conflict for military or fighting purposes,” said UNRWA. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153436>

UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Report of the ad hoc conciliation commission on the inter-State communication submitted by the State of Palestine against Israel under article 11 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

<https://tinyurl.com/2s3annhc>

Addendum 1

<https://tinyurl.com/3m823he6>

Addendum 2

<https://tinyurl.com/htrhx58c>

UNRWA

Remarks by UNRWA Chief of Staff, Mr. Ben Majekodunmi, at the World Humanitarian Day 2024 UN commemoration

... As we know, since the early morning of 7th October - over 40,000 people, possibly far more, have been reportedly killed in Gaza and over 1,200 reportedly killed in Israel.

Within this, the humanitarian community has suffered unspeakable tragedy. At least 289 humanitarian personnel have been killed, from Palestinian and international NGOs and from the UN. ... At least 190 UNRWA premises have been damaged or destroyed, killing over 560 people sheltering inside. Over 135 children of UNRWA staff have been killed. ... The harm inflicted on humanitarian workers and operations has been described by competent entities in the UN and beyond as violations of international law and likely war crimes. The consequences go far beyond Gaza. In the humanitarian community we know that the reason we can work in the most dangerous places is not through force of arms, but through force of law and principles. Each day, many of us depend upon the respect for the UN flag not only by governments but also by individual fighters – in a plane above us, at a roadblock. When that respect ceases, we lose the protection required to help those who need it most. There must be accountability. ...

UNRWA premises, almost all converted into shelters, are filled with people trying to stay clean, trying to care for their children, trying to live. There is the constant sound of drones high in the sky, the sound of incoming fire from ships, the sound of exploding bombs near and far, or silent plumes of smoke rising from the strike of a distant missile. People risk their lives to find clean water and food. Polio spreads in open sewage. Children die from inadequate medical care, while world class hospitals are near. ...

It is in this environment that humanitarian workers are keeping Gaza alive.

I asked my colleagues in Gaza what they would want me to say here. ...

They said that Gazans are angry at the international community, represented on the ground by humanitarian workers, for not stopping the destruction. ...

Amidst the pain, as humanitarians, we look for hope and light where we can find it.

Is there light in the fact that even when an UNRWA school is hit by bombs killing IDPs, and hit again days later killing more, that IDPs still remain there because, in spite of everything, they feel safer under the UN blue flag; safer with UN staff around them?

Is there light in the fact that on a single day in February, UNRWA was able to conduct over 20,000 separate patient visits at our few remaining health clinics? And that one of those clinics, in Nuseirat, on one terrible day, shifted from primary health care to serving as an ICU with staff doing improvised surgery on over 150 trauma cases that arrived within a few hours, under intense bombardment?

Is there hope in the fact that amid the horror of a polio outbreak, the humanitarian community has somehow managed to design a public health campaign to address it; now

the parties to the conflict must enable the plan's implementation. ...

Despite those who might abuse it, whether through attacks or through neutrality violations, the blue UN flag continues to represent the principles of human rights, of international law, and of humanity for all peoples affected by this terrible conflict, on all sides of borders and walls, and regardless of national, religious, or ethnic origins. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/remarks-unrwa-chief-staff-mr-ben-majekodunmi-world-humanitarian-day>

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Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Protecting freedom of religion or belief increases trust and makes our societies safer, OSCE human rights head says

Safeguarding the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief protects the inherent dignity of every individual and at the same time helps to build more tolerant and inclusive societies, reducing tensions and allowing our diverse communities to exist together, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) said on today's International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

"Freedom of religion or belief is at the heart of our democracies and our sense of identity," said ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci. "Safeguarding this right increases mutual understanding and respect, helping to increase the resilience of our societies to polarization, and act as a barrier against violence and hatred."

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief protects every individual's right to have, not to have, adopt, change, or leave a religion or belief. OSCE states have [committed](#) to "recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief" in line with their own conscience. Nobody should face prosecution or persecution because of their choice to exercise this right in a peaceful way.

It is the primary duty of governments to prevent and protect people against violence and attacks based on their religion or belief, or any other aspect of their identity. ...

Violence based on religion or belief [can be a threat to the stability and security of our societies](#). OSCE states have [stressed](#) the importance of "fostering a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and nonbelievers". They have also [noted](#) the "role that discrimination and intolerance can play in fuelling violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism," and recognized the role of interfaith and interreligious dialogue in fostering an inclusive climate that protects freedom of religion or belief. ...

In essence, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief reflects the understanding that diversity of religion or belief exists in every society, and that respecting our differences is the only way for us to live together peacefully.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/574816>

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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>

House of Lords Library Briefing

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2024-0049/LLN-2024-0049.pdf>

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