



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

David Lammy We must avoid any escalation in the Middle East. Reaching a ceasefire deal, delivering more humanitarian aid into Gaza and securing the release of hostages is vital for regional stability. Today I spoke with Iran's new Foreign Minister @araghchi to reiterate this.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1826970361063186923>

Hamish Falconer Appalled at this and reports of aid workers being forced to evacuate in Gaza. Israel's increase in evacuation orders risks undermining vital efforts to provide humanitarian aid. They must protect civilians and allow aid workers to do their jobs.

<https://x.com/HFalconerMP/status/1826972943823274462>

Updated Travel Advice: Israel

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/israel>

Updated Travel Advice: The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

UK-Med

UK-Med compound housing Emergency Medical Team in Gaza damaged by shelling
UK-Med confirms that their residential compound used to house their Emergency Medical Team (EMT) in Khan Younis, in the Israeli Army-designated humanitarian area – was damaged by shelling on the night of 21 August. During this time there was an ongoing operation in the area by the Israeli Armed Forces. The shelling caused significant damage to the building, making it uninhabitable and unsafe.

The compound had been cleared through the deconfliction process that is used to ensure protection for humanitarian personnel. UK-Med staff residing in the compound had moved

to our field hospital in Al Mawasi beforehand as a precautionary measure, despite not being given any evacuation order. Thankfully, all UK-Med staff are safe and uninjured. UK-Med is extremely concerned by this incident and will coordinate with the UN for an independent assessment of the damage.

UK-Med CEO, David Wightwick, said: "We need to establish the facts as to how this took place, and we need assurances that this will not happen again at any of our sites. ... UK-Med is currently providing medical treatment and life-saving surgery for over 8,000 patients per week. To date, we have provided care to over 110,000 people without access to health services in Gaza due to the ongoing conflict, making us one of the largest humanitarian health actors present. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.uk-med.org/2024/08/22/uk-med-compound-in-gaza-damaged/>

United Nations

Tor Wennesland UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in the Middle East (22 August 2024)

... The war in Gaza continues to take a staggering toll on human life. In the more than ten months of war since the horrific acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups on 7 October 2023, more than 40,000 Palestinians and over 1,600 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed. 109 Israelis are still held in Gaza, and the ones alive denied humanitarian visits. Tens of thousands of people have been injured, the vast majority of them Palestinians, including a staggering number of women and children.

In Gaza, incidents of mass civilian casualties, airstrikes by Israel on schools and mosques sheltering the displaced, and the wanton destruction of civilian infrastructure are fueling suffering and violence, which is reverberating throughout the broader region.

The indiscriminate launching of rockets by Hamas and other groups towards population centers in Israel continues. Civilian objects, including infrastructure, and UN premises, are also reportedly being used to shield fighters and military objectives, endangering the lives of civilians around them. The lives of the remaining hostages are at grave risk.

Many Palestinians in Gaza feel they have nowhere safe left to turn. Over the past month, around 200,000 Palestinians have been affected by evacuation orders. This is merely the latest round of mass displacement in Gaza, where nearly two million people have been forced out of their homes and shelters during the war, most of them multiple times. Eighty-five per cent of the Strip has come under evacuation orders since 7 October. ...

Despite facing overwhelming challenges, UN agencies and humanitarian organizations continue to deliver life-saving assistance with remarkable courage through all available crossing points. However, their efforts are jeopardized by unsafe conditions on the ground, which are exacerbated by a complete breakdown of law and order. ...

The scale of destruction is immense and it will take years, if not decades, to recover. The UN is working to repair and improve almost entirely defunct water, sanitation, and hygiene systems in Gaza. The five wastewater treatment plants have shut down and five out of six solid waste management facilities are damaged. The Palestinian Ministry of Health just confirmed the first cases of polio in 25 years. 1.6 million doses of Polio vaccine have been released for a campaign scheduled to begin on 31 August. The UN estimates nearly 40 million tons of debris have been generated in this conflict. Clearing the debris from key areas alone is estimated to take at least five years. ...

Israeli security forces continue to carry out large-scale operations in Area A, including targeting Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other armed groups in densely populated refugee camps and Palestinian urban centres. These operations often result in lethal exchanges with these groups in addition to the killing or injury of bystanders.

Fatal attacks by Palestinian militants on Israelis in the West Bank and Israel have

continued, including a failed bombing attack claimed by Hamas and PIJ in Tel Aviv on 19 August.

The Israeli settler rampage in the Palestinian village of Jit near Nablus that killed one Palestinian and critically injured others on 15 August was yet another illustration of the violent consequences of settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank and the persistent lack of accountability for such crimes.

Inflammatory rhetoric and provocative acts are further enflaming the situation. ...

Let me be clear, if we are to prevent yet another spiraling escalation, the violence must end – there are no justifications for acts of terror, civilians must be protected, and the incitement must stop. Any violation of the status quo at the holy sites must also be firmly rejected. ...

Across the Blue Line and beyond, exchanges between Israel and Hizbullah continue to intensify, particularly following the recent strike in Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan, which resulted in the killing of 12 children, followed by a subsequent strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut that killed a senior Hizbullah commander.

In the wider region, several fatal events exacerbated tensions: Aerial attacks toward Israel from various locations across the region that Israel has attributed to Iran-backed forces, including a Houthi drone strike on Tel Aviv; Israel's strike that targeted Hudaydah port infrastructure in response; and the killing of Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas' politburo in Tehran. ...

A ceasefire and hostages release deal in Gaza is imperative *now* for regional peace and security. ...

The profound social, economic and political fallout from this devastation is yet to be seen and comprehended.

We must work to put in place as soon as possible the political and security frameworks necessary to more ably address the humanitarian crisis, start early recovery and eventually rebuild Gaza, as well as change the negative dynamic in the West Bank

These political and security frameworks – even ones that are considered transitional - cannot be divorced from the context of the ongoing Israeli occupation and unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ...

Security and governance are intrinsically linked and must be addressed in tandem to achieve a lasting peace in Gaza and address the West Bank situation. It is imperative that we establish a comprehensive political framework that is accepted by the Palestinian population and addresses their legitimate aspirations and grievances, while also addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns. ...

This framework must facilitate a Palestinian government that can effectively govern both Gaza and the occupied West Bank and ensure stability and security across the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Palestinian Authority must be at the center of governance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. There is simply no credible alternative.

However, to achieve this and to promote a more durable and credible model of governance to ensure stability and security for Palestinians and Israelis, steps must be taken by all parties and by the international community to strengthen and support the PA. ...

The international community must work together to address the PA's persistent financial crisis, strengthen its capacity and enable its return to Gaza. ...

Most importantly, for any of these efforts to be credible or durable, a political horizon must be re-established. Security fixes alone will not lead to a more stable future for anyone in the region. ...

Ultimately, the only path out of these vicious cycles of despair is a political horizon that will end the occupation and achieve a two-State solution Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian State – living side by side in peace and security within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the pre-1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both. The United Nations will continue to support all

efforts towards that goal.

To read the full transcript see

<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/tor-wennesland-un-special-coordinator-middle-east-peace-process-briefing-security-council-situation-middle-east-22-august-2024>

Ceasefire in Gaza Needed Now, Special Coordinator Tells Security Council, as Polio Spreads, Destruction of Palestinian Territory Continues Representative Calls Gaza ‘Deadliest Place in the World to Be a Child’

... “We need a ceasefire now,” **Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, said, as he stressed that individual and collective capacities to manage the current crises in the Middle East “are stretched beyond their limits”. [[click here to read this briefing in greater detail](#)]

Also briefing the Council today was **Louisa Baxter, Operations Lead at Save the Children’s Emergency Health Unit, Gaza**, who spoke via video link from Deir al Balah, where Israel has issued an evacuation order. “Outside this room, I am surrounded by overwhelming destruction — more than 1.9 million people have been displaced and are moving through streets filled with rubble, rubbish and wastewater,” she reported. Further, she said: “As we speak, polio is spreading in Gaza and it will not wait at the inspection gate at Kerem Shalom or the customs desk at Ben Gurion airport.” ...

The first confirmed case — a 10-month-old baby in Deir al Balah — is an individual tragedy, as well as a sign of a larger looming catastrophe, she said. For every 200 children who become infected, one will suffer irreversible paralysis. Noting that polio is highly infectious and spreads via wastewater “which is now everywhere in Gaza”, she said “Israel has destroyed water and sanitation infrastructure, while effectively shutting off clean water from entering the Strip”. And while polio is easily prevented by a vaccine, vaccination services have also broken down over the last 10 months and 750 health staff have been killed since October 2023 while less than a quarter of hospitals remain functional. ...

To effectively respond to the polio outbreak, she called for “two sustained cessations of hostilities, no less than one week for each phase”, to commence immediately. All attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel must end and people must be able to bring children to vaccination points in safety. ...

However, **the representative of the United States** said a comprehensive ceasefire and hostage release deal is now “in sight”. Reaffirming her country’s “iron-clad support for Israel’s security”, she recalled United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s recent visits to the region, and said Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has confirmed acceptance of the bridging proposal that her country, Qatar and Egypt put forward last week. “This is a decisive moment,” she said, calling on all Council members to use their leverage to press Hamas to accept the bridging proposal, “which includes massive and immediate benefits for the Palestinians in Gaza and incorporates a number of Hamas’s earlier demands”. ...

“Washington, for 10 months now, has kept the entire Council hostage, threatening their veto,” **the representative of the Russian Federation** said. ... Israel is continuing its brutal operation, only pausing when it needs to. Now the United States is trying to sell yet another deal that suits Israel and is asking Council members to exert pressure on Hamas. But, “according to the information we have”, he said, Israel insists on keeping a military presence in Gaza. ...

Speakers also echoed concerns about the emergence of polio on the Gaza Strip, and reiterated the calls for a humanitarian pause, to carry out a full-scale vaccination campaign, among them **the representative of the United Kingdom**. “Gaza has become the deadliest place in the world to be a child,” he observed, noting that the polio outbreak

is “another deadly threat to a people already facing a multitude of deadly threats”. Israel must allow safe, unhindered aid access into Gaza and establish effective deconfliction mechanisms, he said, also pointing out that the British non-governmental organization UK-Med reported that their residential compound in the humanitarian zone was damaged by Israel shelling “just last night”. [\[click here to read this speech in full\]](#)

The representative of France called for an urgent ceasefire and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. “The UN cannot work to save lives through vaccines, only to have them destroyed again by bombs and bullets,” added **Malta’s representative**. ...

For his part, **the representative of Israel**, said: “We did not ask for this war.” Israel is not intentionally killing civilians and “there is no famine in Gaza”, and the Israel Defense Forces take pride in being “the most moral army in the world”, he added. Since the start of the war, his country has facilitated more than 14,000 trucks carrying aid into Gaza — including over 700,000 tons of food, he said. Further, it continues to work with partners to address medical needs in the Strip, he said, adding that enough polio vaccines for over 2 million Gazans were delivered between December 2023 and January 2024. “Between 95 to 99 per cent of Gazans are already vaccinated,” he said.

Noting that over 100,000 Israelis remain displaced in their own country — “unable to return home due to constant rocket attacks by Hamas and Hizbullah” — he said that, 320 days since the “slaughter”, the Council has not condemned Hamas for the atrocities committed on 7 October 2023. He asked how the organ — created and charged with protecting peace after the horrors of the Holocaust — could not condemn the largest slaughter of Jews since that time.

It is Hamas, he continued, that puts civilians in harm’s way and deprives them of international aid and, rather than condemn Hamas’ abuse of its own people, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other UN agencies have chosen to collaborate with them. He asked: “How can these bodies be part of the solution when they intensify the problem?” ...

Gaza had been polio-free for the last 25 years, **Riyad H. Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine**, said. But, now it is under threat of this terrible disease that causes paralysis and death. ... Voicing support for the Secretary-General’s proposal for an urgent vaccination campaign, he stressed that any obstruction of this effort is proof of Israel’s genocidal intent. ...

Noting that the Israeli Government does not care about even its own citizens, he said it is killing hostages and bragging about retrieving their corpses when it could have secured their release alive. “Clearly, it cares more about killing Palestinians than it cares about saving Israelis,” he said, adding: “Those who want to place the fate of our people in the hands of this Israeli Government, hoping it will ever act in good faith, are gravely mistaken.” ... Deal or no deal, there is no excuse for Israel’s continued killing in Gaza and its assaults in the West Bank. Israel does not have a right to genocide, and the Council has the obligation to stop a genocide, he stressed.

“[State of Palestine] President [Mahmoud] Abbas has declared his intention and the intention of the Palestinian leadership to head to Gaza,” he said, calling on the Council to visit the Gaza Strip, “to see first-hand the horrors our people are enduring” and to support President Abbas. Gaza is the beating, bleeding heart of Palestine, he said, inviting “all those who have spines” to come to the Strip and collectively impose the ceasefire and “stop the bleeding.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15797.doc.htm>

UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL)

Joint statement from UNIFIL and UNSCOL

In light of worrying developments across the Blue Line since the early morning, UNSCOL and UNIFIL call on all to cease fire and refrain from further escalatory action.

A return to the cessation of hostilities, followed by the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1701, is the only sustainable way forward.

We will continue our contacts to strongly urge for de-escalation.

<https://unifil.unmissions.org/joint-statement-unifil-and-unscol>

Save the Children

Gaza: New Israeli orders force thousands in Deir al-Balah to flee again, and disrupt last aid hub

New displacement orders issued by Israeli authorities have forced another mass movement of families and humanitarian workers from areas in Deir al-Balah - one of the only remaining areas in the occupied Gaza Strip with essential infrastructure and warehouses storing aid supplies. ...

At least 24 NGOs have reported impacts from orders in the past week resulting in the forced displacement of staff members, operations disrupted, and at least one site sheltering civilians under attack....

So-called “evacuation” orders issued by Israeli authorities on 13, 15, 16 and 21 August continue to obstruct aid operations, affecting a number of agencies including Save the Children, Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), MSF, Solidarités International, Medical Aid for Palestinians, Oxfam, Humanity & Inclusion, Action Against Hunger, Islamic Relief, Project HOPE, DanChurchAid and Norwegian Church Aid and partners, and Palestinian partners of ActionAid, War Child, Danish Refugee Council, Médicos del Mundo, Middle East Children’s Alliance and WeWorld. ...

The UN [said](#) that multiple orders issued by Israeli forces in Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah between 8 and 17 August impacted 17 health facilities, including five primary healthcare centres and nine medical points, disrupting essential health services. Disruptions will also threaten the ability to administer critically needed polio vaccines once they arrive in Gaza. ...

Humanitarian actors must be allowed to deliver aid based on need rather than the designation of safe areas by a party to the conflict.

“Even if Israeli authorities let polio vaccines in, with the biggest responders in Gaza constantly pin-balled from one place to the next, how can we deliver an effective campaign and reach the children in dire need of that protection? ...” said Jeremy Stoner, Save the Children Regional Director for the Middle East. ...

All parties to conflict have an obligation to facilitate humanitarian access at all times. Israel as the occupying power is obligated to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the occupied population are met. This includes facilitating humanitarian aid and creating conditions that enable the safe provision of supplies ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-new-israeli-orders-force-thousands-deir-al-balah-flee-again-and-disrupt-last-aid-hub>

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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