



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)

Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland Update to 30th June 2024

<https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2024-08/1050879717/Hate%20Motivations%20Bulletin%20Period%20ending%2030th%20June%202024.pdf>

Hate Motivations Tables Period Ending 30th June 2024 (XLSX, 260.28 KB)

<https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2024-08/2054777380/Hate%20Motivations%20Tables%20Period%20Ending%2030th%20June%202024.xlsx>

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Holocaust

Scottish Government FoI Release

Holocaust Memorial Day Saltire article

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202400396399/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/2f7nk8zm>

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Israel

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UNIFIL is vital for calming the situation on the Blue Line: UK explanation of vote at the UN Security Council

With the situation on the Blue Line the most precarious it has been for years, we cannot overstate the importance of UNIFIL for calming the situation on the border.

That's why we voted in favour today.

We commend the UN troops and staff of the Mission who are working in such difficult circumstances – risking their lives – to fulfil the mandate.

Near daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line have killed and injured civilians. UN peacekeepers have been wounded too. This is deeply concerning and we welcome the mandate's call for all parties to protect civilians in accordance with international law and to take all measures to respect the safety and security of UN Peacekeepers.

Over the weekend, my Foreign Minister spoke with Lebanon's PM Mikati and Israel's Strategic Affairs Minister Dermer to reassure them of our support for security on both sides of the Blue Line.

But while the UK is supporting Lebanon's security and stability through its government and Armed Forces, Iran is sowing further conflict and chaos by supplying advanced weaponry to Hizballah. We urge Iran to stand down their proxy and we call on Hizballah to deescalate immediately.

Only a political solution can deliver the peace we so desperately need.

As my Foreign Minister said earlier this month: a widening of this conflict is in nobody's interest – the consequences could be catastrophic. One miscalculation is all it takes. All parties need to engage immediately with diplomatic efforts based on the principles set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/unifil-is-vital-for-calming-the-situation-on-the-blue-line-uk-explanation-of-vote-at-the-un-security-council>

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))

Anneliese Dodds Gaza is on the brink of a devastating polio outbreak, another deadly threat to people already facing dire sanitary conditions. Humanitarian workers must be able to work safely and carry out a vaccination campaign as quickly as possible.

<https://x.com/AnnelieseDodds/status/1829141118799491154>

UK at the UN The UK and @swiss_un have called for the Security Council to meet on the humanitarian situation in Gaza ... The UN has warned aid operations and staff in Gaza are at risk, at a time when a vaccine campaign is urgently needed to stop a polio outbreak.

https://x.com/UKUN_NewYork/status/1828827132321316933

Scottish Government FoI Releases

Former First Minister's foreign meetings and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) funding

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202400396760/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/hdtdc4twd>

Former First Minister's meeting with Jordanian Ambassador and budget proposals

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202300391238/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/bd725wab>

European Union

Informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers: Press remarks by High Representative [Josep Borrell] upon arrival

... **Josep Borrell:** ... we will receive the United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Sigrid [Kaag]. She will explain the situation of even the United Nations, which are under strong pressure of the Israeli government, preventing all the United Nations organisations to do their work. I do not have to tell you which is the situation in Gaza. Every day is more terrible than the previous day. The conversation for a ceasefire has been sliding from one day to another, without getting any result. And in the meantime, the bombing continues, and the number of civilian casualties [is] increasing. At the same time, it is still more worrisome the call from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel [Israel Katz] to displace people from the West Bank, doing more or less the same thing that they did with the people in Gaza. This is completely unacceptable, and I hope that the Ministers will raise their voice against the situation in Gaza, in the West Bank, the treatment of the United Nations and the way this war is being performed in accordance or, in violation of the humanitarian law.

This will be discussed once again by the Ministers, and I hope that we will take stock of this dramatic situation. ...

Q: Mr Borrell, will Ministers take sanctions against Israeli Ministers?

Josep Borrell: As you know, this is not an executive meeting, no decision will be taken - cannot be taken, because it is an informal meeting. But certainly, I initiated the procedure to ask the Member States – if they want, if they consider it appropriate, to include in our list of sanctions some Israeli Ministers that have been launching some hate messages. Unacceptable hate messages, against the Palestinians and proposing things that go clearly against international law, and it is an incitation to commit war crimes. And I think the European Union should have no taboos to use our toolbox in order to make humanitarian law [be] respected. But it is not my decision. I only have the capacity of proposing; Member States will decide. ...

To read the full transcript see

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/informal-meeting-eu-foreign-ministers-press-remarks-high-representative-upon-arrival_en

United Nations

Security Council Extends Mandate of United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2749 (2024)

The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) until 31 August 2025, stressing the importance of — and the need to achieve — a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. ...

... **the representative of France** — noting tensions along the Blue Line and the “real” risk of open warfare — called on Iran and groups it supports to refrain from carrying out attacks. ...

... **the representative of the United States** said that, on the morning of 8 October 2023, Hizbullah made the escalatory decision to bombard communities in northern Israel, and, for the past 11 months, has done so “on nearly a daily basis”. Expressing regret that

several Council members blocked the organ from condemning Hizbullah for these repeated destabilizing actions in today's text, he underscored that Lebanon should neither be "a haven for terrorist organizations" nor "a launchpad for attacks against Israel". He also pointed out that Iran provides Hizbullah with advanced weaponry — a point echoed by the United Kingdom's representative — and said, in that context, that extending UNIFIL's mandate supports the goal of regional de-escalation. ...

Expressing concern over daily intensive mutual fire along the Blue Line and the recent practice of political assassinations, **the representative of the Russian Federation** stressed that the current military escalation is linked to the unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Calling for a ceasefire and an end to "the brutal assault on the Palestinian people", **Algeria's representative** cited Israel's occupation as "the leading reason for instability in the region". ...

Meanwhile, **Israel's representative** recalled that, on 8 October 2023, Lebanon launched an unprovoked attack against his country across the Blue Line in a flagrant breach of resolution 1701 (2006) and in service of Iran's regime. Hizbullah has built a vast arsenal of rockets in southern Lebanon "under the nose of UNIFIL", he said, adding that 90 per cent of the missiles fired at Israel this week were launched from civilian areas in that location. Despite that, the word "Hizbullah" does not appear in the text, he pointed out, underscoring that — while "we do not expect UNIFIL to fight Hizbullah" — his delegation expects the Force to "report the reality on the ground".

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15801.doc.htm>

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))

Tensions in Syria, Region 'Have Reached Dangerous New Levels', Special Envoy Warns Security Council, Calling for Inclusive Political Process Civilian Displacement Persists at 'Staggeringly High Levels', Says Assistant Secretary-General

... "Tensions in the region have reached dangerous new levels with a series of incidents," **Geir Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria**, told the [Security Council]. He expressed alarm over the attacks on a soccer field in the village of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan, which resulted in civilian casualties, including children; Israeli strikes in Beirut; the targeted killings of leaders of Hamas in Tehran, and then Hizbullah in Beirut by Israel; and the significant escalation of hostilities witnessed last week which saw Hizbullah strikes in Israel and Israeli strikes in Lebanon.

Air strikes in Homs, Hama, Deraa and then on the Syria-Lebanon border by Israel are also of dire concern, he went on to say. ... There have also been reports of rocket and drone strikes from Syrian territory towards the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan. ...

The representative of the Russian Federation said that Syria is directly suffering from more than 10 months of confrontation stemming from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the arbitrary strikes of the Israeli Air Force in violation of provisions of international law, both on Syria and on the territories of neighbouring countries. "Almost every week, Israeli aviation carries out strikes on Damascus and the suburbs and also on other Syrian provinces," he said. While this is a grave violation of sovereignty of Syria and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, Western members of the Council remain "indifferent". ...

China's delegate urged Israel to cease its attacks on Syria and foreign forces to end their illegal military presence in Syria. ...

Syria's representative reiterated his delegation's condemnation of Israel's speaker raising pictures of Syrian children who were murdered and claiming they were Syrian

Israeli children. All the people in the Golan reject the Israeli occupation and look forward to ending it, he added. What exacerbates the risks in the region is the fact that some Western countries, including the United States, are amassing fleets and armies to support the criminal Israel occupation entity, to persist in its crimes, massacres and attacks. ...

Iran's delegate ... strongly condemned Israel's ongoing aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, targeting civilian population and infrastructure, as well as its continued occupation of the Syrian Golan. With "ironclad" support from Washington, D.C., and political support from London, Israel continues its daily atrocities and systematic war crimes against the people of Palestine in Gaza and the West Bank, while violating Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15802.doc.htm>

UN upholds safety and efficacy of Gaza polio vaccine

... UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric noted that there had been misinformation surrounding the vaccine.

"I want to make the following clear: the safest and most effective way to protect children against the polio virus, regardless of the variant, is to vaccinate them," he said.

Several news stories have appeared online in Israel and the United States, quoting two Israeli scientists falsely asserting that the polio vaccine due to be used in Gaza is "experimental" and a danger to citizens in both Palestine and Israel.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN agency that assists Palestine refugees, UNRWA, are preparing to launch the campaign, which will be conducted in two rounds.

More than 640,000 children under the age of 10 will receive two drops of oral polio vaccine type 2. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/08/1153641>

Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General

... Moving to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and most particularly in the West Bank. I can tell you we have been following the developments since this morning with great concern and are very worried about what we are seeing. Our humanitarian colleagues at OCHA are warning that people there are increasingly exposed to deadly warfare tactics that seem to exceed international standards for law enforcement. Today, at least nine Palestinians, including children, were killed, and others injured, in the Governorates of Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas — located west of the Jordan Valley. The operations involved Israeli helicopters, drones, and ground forces.

Most of the people killed were killed hit by air strikes, while others were subject to sniper fire and other lethal methods. Military bulldozers have been observed destroying infrastructure, with initial indications that damage has been caused to roads and electricity equipment. This resulted in a power outage across the Jenin refugee camp. Israeli forces also conducted operations in close proximity to four hospitals – two in Jenin and two in Tulkarm. Hospitals have been surrounded and all movement in and out of those facilities have been affected, particularly medical teams.

To put this in context, since 7 October 2023, more than 630 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Over 140 of them were killed in about 50 air strikes, up from 6 fatalities in airstrikes in 2023 before 7 October 2023. Most of the fatalities in this period were killed by Israeli forces but at least 11 were killed by settlers.

During the same period, 15 Israelis, including 9 members of Israeli forces and 5 settlers, were killed by Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. And in Israel, attacks by Palestinians from the West Bank resulted in the killing of ten Israelis and seven Palestinian perpetrators. Our human rights colleagues remind us that, in the West Bank, Israeli forces must adhere to international policing standards, where lethal force and firearms are a last resort that can only be used against imminent threats of death or serious injury.

Turning to Gaza, from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warn that humanitarian operations are still heavily restricted by hostilities, insecurity, and mass evacuation orders affecting aid transport routes and facilities. Despite these challenges, we and our partners continue to work. And I also want to flag that yesterday evening, a clearly marked UN humanitarian vehicle — part of a convoy that had been fully coordinated with the IDF — was struck 10 times by IDF gunfire — including with bullets targeting front windows. The two staff members in the vehicle were thankfully unharmed. This shows you I think, we had a senior colleague talk to you about the need for armoured cars and this is clearly why, it saved the lives of our two colleagues. This is the latest incident to underscore that systems in place for coordination are not working; we continue to work with the IDF to ensure that incidents like that do not happen again.

We reiterate that parties must respect international humanitarian law at all times. This means that civilians must be protected, and their essential needs — including food, water, shelter and health — must be met, wherever they may be in Gaza. This applies to those under evacuation orders regardless of whether they move or not. And those who leave must have enough time to do so, as well as a safe route and safe places. ...

Question: ... On the shooting of the UN vehicle, where did that take place?

Spokesman: It took place in Gaza. I don't have the exact location with me, but I will try to get that for you.

Question: And I guess the UN is in contact with the Israeli authorities about this incident. And what are they exactly saying about that?

Spokesman: We're not really getting any answers. ... clearly the coordination is not working as it should be. ...

Question: At the Security Council this morning, the Israeli ambassador, Danny Danon, said that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] destroyed a Hizbulah rocket launcher that was about 150 metres from a UNIFIL base. Has the UN expressed any concern to the IDF about them firing so close to UNIFIL bases? Have you done any démarche or anything?

Spokesman: Our colleagues at UNIFIL are in daily, if not more, contact with the Israelis. I will have to check if a particular message was passed on that front.

The incident referred to in the note read by the Spokesman in his opening remarks took place near Wadi Gaza. ...

Question: Do you assess this incident with the UN vehicle in Gaza as intentional or coincidental?

Spokesman: We have no way to assess the mindset of those who are shooting at us. We do know that the movement of this particular convoy was coordinated with the Israeli authorities. Whether the information wasn't passed down, whether it was deliberate, whether there was another reason, those are explanations we would like to get.

Question: Do you think that the portrayal of the United Nations as a helper of terrorists in Gaza is kind of boosting, in some way, or lowering the threshold for violence against UN members?

Spokesman: It's an interesting question. I think we have seen from many quarters a pretty direct rhetoric against the United Nations, against UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East], against the Secretary-General frankly. Words have consequences. But, again, on this particular incident, I can't judge the mindset of those who shot at the UN vehicle, why they did it. But we've expressed our worry and our concern about the language that has been used to demonize the UN. ...

Question: We know this is not the first time that the UN vehicles has been shot by Israeli IDF in Gaza. ... is there any investigation? Are there any investigations for the previous cases that IDF shot the bullets here?

Spokesman: The investigations are in the hands of the Israelis. ...

Question: ... Why aren't you actually investigating all these incidents of shooting on UN personnel and killing?

Spokesman: We are looking into it, investigating it on our end, right? But, we are the victims here, right? It's not as if we have access to those who are shooting at us. So, we can determine what happened with the information that we have from our own witnesses and looking at the ballistics of a vehicle that was hit. But, in terms of pushing for accountability and investigating from the other end, we don't have any leverage on that side. ...

Question: ... So, you're saying that you are the victim. So it's more difficult for you to investigate this. So, how do you think the UN should go forward to get an investigation and should there be maybe an independent commission to look into this?

Spokesman: We continue to press for accountability. I think after this conflict is over, and we hope it's over much sooner than later, there will need to be accountability. There will be boards of inquiry to look at the destruction of UN property, the death of UN personnel, notably our security colleague. So, we continue to press for accountability. But, our concern right now is twofold, is to deliver as much humanitarian aid as possible and to keep the humanitarian workers safe while they do that work. ...

Question: ... This incident happened in the Israeli controlled Wadi Gaza. So, the security concern is from IDF? ...

Spokesman: Our concern is to keep our people safe. We're trying to...

Question: So there's a potential risk that this might happen again?

Spokesman: There are risks every day, every hour to our staff. We're trying to be as transparent as possible while not sharing information that may make the situation worse for us. ...

Question: ... has the United Nations formally protested to Israel on this incident?

Spokesman: Yes, our colleagues on the ground have. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/db240828.doc.htm>

UN World Food Programme

WFP temporarily suspend staff movement across Gaza following a security incident that targeted WFP vehicle

The World Food Programme (WFP) ... is pausing the movement of its employees in Gaza until further notice after a WFP team came under fire on the evening of 27 August, a few metres from an Israeli check point at the Wadi Gaza bridge.

The team was returning from a mission to Kerem Shalom/ Karam Abu Salem with two WFP armoured vehicles after escorting a convoy of trucks carrying humanitarian cargo routed to Gaza's central area.

Despite being clearly marked and receiving multiple clearances by Israeli authorities to approach, the vehicle was directly struck by gunfire as it was moving towards an Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) checkpoint. It sustained at least ten bullets: five on the driver's side, two on the passenger side and three on other parts of the vehicle. None of the employees onboard were physically harmed.

Though this is not the first security incident to occur during the war it is the first time that a WFP vehicle has been directly shot at near a checkpoint, despite securing the necessary clearances, as per standard protocol. The incident is a stark reminder of the rapidly and ever shrinking humanitarian space in the Gaza Strip ...

“This is totally unacceptable and the latest in a series of unnecessary security incidents that have endangered the lives of WFP’s team in Gaza,” said WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain. “As last night’s events show, the current deconfliction system is failing and this cannot go on any longer. I call on the Israeli authorities and all parties to the conflict to act immediately to ensure the safety and security of all aid workers in Gaza.” ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.wfp.org/news/wfp-temporarily-suspend-staff-movement-across-gaza-following-security-incident-targeted-wfp>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Comment by UN Human Rights Spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani on West Bank violence

A major operation by Israeli security forces (ISF) in the occupied West Bank risks seriously deepening the already catastrophic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Israel’s operations in Jenin, Tubas and Tulkarm today, and the killing of at least nine Palestinians, two of them reportedly children, take the overall death toll in the West Bank since 7 October to 637. This represents the highest number of fatalities over a period of eight months since the UN first started recording casualties in the West Bank two decades ago.

Many children have been killed while throwing stones at highly protected ISF, as have other Palestinians posing no imminent threat to life or serious injury. Such unnecessary or disproportionate use of force and the increase in apparent targeted and other summary killings are alarming.

Thousands of Palestinians have been arbitrarily arrested and tortured, subjected to unrelenting settler violence, severe restrictions on movement and expression, their homes and property destroyed or seized, and forcibly displaced.

Israel, as the occupying power, must abide by its obligations under international law. The Israeli security forces’ use of airstrikes and other military weapons and tactics violates human rights norms and standards applicable to law enforcement operations. Alleged unlawful killings must be thoroughly and independently investigated and those responsible held to account.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/08/comment-un-human-rights-spokesperson-ravina-shamdasani-west-bank-violence>

UNRWA

MOPAN Assessment Report: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unrwa2024/MOPAN_2024_UNRWA_Part1.pdf

Technical and Statistical Annex

https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unrwa2024/MOPAN_2024_UNRWA_Part2.pdf

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

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