



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Israel

House of Commons Point of Order

Point of Order

Andrew Mitchell (Conservative): ... I am concerned that the Government have not always been consistent with the explanations that they have given of their policy in relation to arms exports to Israel. In particular, some of the explanations that Ministers have given in this House are inconsistent with accounts that have been given elsewhere, including in the other place. My noble friend Lord Howard is also pursuing this matter in the other place. This is a critical foreign policy matter involving a close ally. Mr Speaker, have you had any indication that the Foreign Secretary intends to come to the House to make a statement on this matter and to clear up any misunderstanding that might have arisen as a result of discrepancies between what we have been told and what Ministers have said elsewhere?

Mr Speaker: ... As he well knows, the Chair is not responsible for the accuracy of ministerial remarks, either in this House or elsewhere; but I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench will have noted his comments, and I am sure they have been taken on board. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-08/debates/0AC3379A-D3C6-465B-9E9E-BE03EFD4707D/PointOfOrder>

House of Lords Ministerial Statement and Q&A

Anniversary of 7 October Attacks: Middle East

The Lord Privy Seal, Baroness Smith of Basildon, read [the statement made by the Prime Minister to the House of Commons](#).

col 1913 Lord True (Conservative): ... [the Lord Privy Seal] did indeed speak for the whole House when, in the most graphic and moving tones, she invoked the horror of that terrible day and all the victims: dead and still alive and, frankly, those who will never forget, so long as they live, the heinous frenzy of terror committed last 7 October by Hamas. We on this side share every sentiment she expressed about that horrific day.

As my right honourable friend the leader of the Opposition said yesterday, this was a “modern pogrom—the worst loss of Jewish life since the second world war”.

It was, as he said, “a horrendous reminder of the antisemitism in our world and the existential threats that Israel faces”.—[[Official Report, Commons, 7/10/24; col. 25.](#)]

... in particular our thoughts are with those British families who lost loved ones and with the family of Emily Damari, our innocent compatriot still held hostage by Hamas. We hear that many hostages are being held to shield the frankly worthless life of the vicious and cowardly killer Yahya Sinwar. Can the noble Baroness give us our latest assessment of whether Sinwar is still in control of Hamas?

Did the noble Baroness see the despicable remarks of the Supreme Leader of Iran? In calling yet again for the total eradication of the State of Israel, he declared, about 7 October and the rape, slaughter and hostage-taking, that it was a “correct move”. A correct move, my Lords? Palestinians, he said, had every right to do this. ... Can the noble Baroness tell the House whether the Iranian chargé d'affaires was called in by the Foreign Secretary to condemn that repulsive endorsement of the events of 7 October, and what the Prime Minister so rightly described in the Statement as a wholly illegal “act of aggression” by Iran against Israel in support of terrorists?

We on this side fully endorse the noble Baroness's remarks that Israel has every right under international law to defend itself against the aggression by the Iranian regime and its paid proxies. ...

No one wishes to see an escalation of this conflict. It has gone too far and too long. Matters could be solved far more speedily if Iran and its terrorist proxies ended their threats to destroy Israel and the raining of terror and rockets on Israeli civilians. ... The activities of this axis of terrorists have caused untold and avoidable suffering to peoples across the Middle East—Jew, Muslim and Christian; Iranian, Israeli, Arab and Palestinian. These actions must cease.

Much concern was expressed yesterday—as it should be every day—about anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom. According to the Metropolitan Police's official statistics, there has been a fourfold increase in anti-Semitic crime since 7 October. Nationwide, 2,170 anti-Semitic incidents have been reported since last 7 October. ... there is no place for anti-Islamic or anti-Semitic actions in our country. Does the noble Baroness think that more could be done to protect our Jewish community and make all Jews feel safe in our country?

col 1914 I very much welcome the humanitarian support to Lebanon ... as well as the support to Palestinians who are suffering so grievously in Gaza. ...

Let me be very clear: Israel has the right to defend itself against the existential threat from Hezbollah in Lebanon. Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation proscribed by our Government. Israel has a right to eliminate terrorists who threaten its right to exist. ... Hezbollah should have implemented UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The nature of its leadership can be seen by the fact that in 2006 it promised to abide by that resolution and to withdraw north of the Litani. Instead, they filled the whole area with hundreds of thousands of missiles, underground fortifications and the infrastructure of vicious, militant terror. ...

The road to peace may, regrettably, be long and difficult ... Peace will never come about without guarantees of the security of the State of Israel. The best benefit to the great

Palestinian people, who are suffering so much, would be the peace and security that could and must follow from that security for Israel. ...

col 1915 Lord Newby (Liberal Democrat): ... Today, we mark an extraordinarily sombre anniversary. The barbarism of the Hamas attack was almost beyond imagining, and our thoughts today are very much with Jewish people, wherever they may be—not just in recognition of the sorrow and grief felt by those directly affected but because the events of 7 October were only the start of a year of fear and anxiety for the entire Jewish community, wherever they live, which continue to this day. Of course, it has also been a horrendous year for the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as for the population of Lebanon, which now finds itself engulfed in a cycle of increasing violence and destruction.

The last 12 months have amply demonstrated that the British Government's ability to influence events in the region is limited. ... But that does not mean that we should do nothing. ...

First, we can do more to aid the innocent populations of Gaza and Lebanon. In the case of Gaza, we are now funding UNRWA again, which is most welcome. The Statement is unclear about how much our new commitment to UNRWA amounts to and how far this provision of aid is constrained by our financial resources and how far by the unjustifiable Israeli restrictions on the flow of aid into Gaza. ... What is the Israeli Government's response to our requests for the opening of more crossings and the provision of a safe environment for aid workers?

Secondly, on Lebanon, the Government are now providing £15 million of support, but this is a small fraction of the £200 million that we were providing in 2019, when obviously there was nothing like the level of devastation that now prevails. ...

Thirdly, the Government have supported Israel militarily in countering the bombardment it suffered from Iran last week. We are sympathetic to this support, but the Statement is totally silent on the form it took, and the Government have been unclear about its limits. At a point when Israel is clearly contemplating a military response to the Iranian attack, it would be helpful if the Government could confirm that the military support they give to Israel in the future will continue to be limited to defensive purposes.

We can and should do everything possible to fight hatred of Jews or Muslims in the United Kingdom. Attacks on both communities have increased greatly in the last 12 months. Passions have been inflamed and, although the situation in the UK will inevitably remain more tense as long as there is severe conflict in the Middle East, calmer voices can and must prevail. In a number of places, faith leaders from Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities have come together to deliver messages of unity in their localities, not least in schools. Such initiatives are hugely important, and we should do whatever we can, as individuals, to support them in the places where we live. ...

col 1916 Baroness Smith of Basildon: ... I think we all feel the weight of what has happened upon us. Many of us have met families of the hostages ... and you can almost feel the weight of their dignity and their suffering ...

... there is no justification at all for the attacks that took place on Israel on 7 October. It is hard to see how anybody, including the Supreme Leader of Iran, can seek to justify such comments. It must be understood that Hamas will have known that Israel would have to defend itself, and the horror that would be unleashed in the region as a result. It is deeply shocking. There is no route to peace of any kind—temporary, long-lasting or an eventual two-state solution—that does not involve international diplomacy. That is the only way forward to try to find a resolution to protect people in the region.

Both noble Lords made the point that what is happening in the region is played out in the streets of the UK. Up and down our country, people have been subject to attacks and abuse for being either Jewish or Muslim, and I think everybody in this House will totally and utterly condemn such abuse and attacks. ...

... Hezbollah is a proscribed organisation and is treated as such. We all utterly condemn its actions: that is why it is proscribed. How can Israel trust Hezbollah or have trust in progress towards peace? It is precisely because there is no trust that international efforts are so important. ... That is why the Prime Minister has had so many meetings with leaders across the region and others to try to build that coalition, to bring pressure to bear and to do what we can to bring about an initial cease-fire in Gaza but also to protect those in Lebanon.

col 1917 The noble Lord, Lord Newby, asked for details of our operations in support of Israel. I say to him that all defensive operations are in line with international law and always will be. He will understand that I will not give any further information than that, but I can give him that assurance.

The key point is, and both noble Lords expressed this succinctly and very sincerely, that we must work across nations to bring people together and be steadfast in our support for the security of Israel, for security in the region but also for the humanitarian aid that is so essential to civilians who are suffering and dying now. ...

Lord Howard of Lympne (Conservative): ... The Statement referred to Emily Damari, the only British hostage remaining in Gaza, whose mother I had the privilege of meeting last week. Would the Leader tell us what specific action His Majesty's Government are taking, through Qatar or other intermediaries, to try to secure her release? In view of the part played by Iran in fomenting violence across the region, and the remarks of the Supreme Leader to which my noble friend referred, will the Government reconsider their decision not to proscribe the IRGC?

Baroness Smith of Basildon: Clearly, Emily's mother had the same effect on the noble Lord as she had on me when I met her. We must try to understand how she must feel, with not knowing. When I spoke to her, she had not heard from her daughter for some considerable time. Not knowing is almost worse than understanding what is happening. Some of the reports of Emily's bravery are quite incredible; that will become evident and hopefully she can be returned home. ...

The issue about the IRGC is under review. It is sanctioned and that will continue. ...

col 1918 **The Lord Bishop of Oxford:** ... On Sunday evening I was privileged to take part in the anniversary of the last day of relative peace, in a large community and interfaith vigil in Oxford, for Oxford and Oxfordshire. Despite terrible weather, well over 200 people came together, drawn from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities, as well as those from other faiths and those of no faith. ... It was an enormous encouragement and comfort to see the way in which different sections of the community were able to come together and make a stand for peace, in remembrance and lament for all that has been lost, and in a common commitment to community cohesion.

As other noble Lords have said already, this is a particular conflict that places almost unique strains on our own communities in the United Kingdom. Will the Minister say what the Government are doing and plan to do in the future to encourage this deeper and greater community cohesion, as these stresses no doubt continue in the year to come?

Baroness Smith of Basildon: ... I know that this is one of the issues that my noble friend Lord Khan, the Faith Minister, is interested in: bringing faiths together not just in times of conflict but as a general understanding in our communities. In areas where faiths work together and churches reach out, community cohesion is stronger as a result. So we need to look beyond this conflict, as well. As important as it is now, it is also important that community cohesion through faith communities— involving those of all faiths and none—is an ongoing process. We should never lose sight of how important it is, and the contribution it can make to strengthening our communities.

Lord Walney (Crossbench): Do the Government share the deep alarm of so many in this country that on this weekend, the anniversary of the heinous attack on Jewish people in Israel, many felt emboldened to march through our capital with clear displays of support

for Hezbollah, an organisation committed to the violent eradication of Israel? ...

Baroness Smith of Basildon: The noble Lord is right that Hezbollah is a proscribed organisation. Its views are abhorrent and there is no place for promoting the role or organisation of Hezbollah at all on the streets of London. ...

col/ 1919 Lord Grocott (Labour): My Lords, we all know that, sooner or later, the dreadful violence that has erupted in southern Israel, in Gaza and now in Lebanon will subside. There will then be an uneasy truce and, as sure as night follows day, the violence will occur again until the fundamental problems of the region are addressed. The most fundamental problem, surely, is that there cannot possibly be peace in this part of the Middle East until the Palestinians obtain what the Israelis achieved and love: a state of their own. ...

Baroness Smith of Basildon: ... That is what the two-state solution is: a safe and secure Israel and a strong and viable state of Palestine. There is a lesson on this. ... At no time can the countries involved in negotiation, and in trying to reach the two-state solution, take a step back and think, "It's quietened down now, we can forget about it". ... we need constant vigilance to ensure that, until we can guarantee the security and safety of civilians across the region, we have to remain engaged. ...

Lord Swire (Conservative): For some years now, we have had a British military programme, with British military training teams training the Lebanese army extremely successfully. Does the Leader of the House include the remnants of those trainers, if we still have them in Lebanon, in her calls to come away from that country now? ...

Baroness Smith of Basildon: I am not sighted on the issue of the trainers that the noble Lord referred to, but he will know that our military personnel will always act within international law, which is defensive. ...

col/ 1920 Lord Winston (Labour): ... I have numerous family members in Israel, including my brother's family and nephews, many friends, PhD students and scientific connections who have helped us in my lab and have been there. There are also many Arabs and Palestinians who have worked in my lab in London and have been funded through various funds that we have raised for them in London, as well as PhD students whom I have been supporting in the West Bank and Gaza ...

I want to suggest to the noble Baroness one thing that has perhaps never really been understood. As Jews, we have been pointed out as different, as everybody knows. Over many generations and hundreds of years, Jews have felt eventually very lonely and extremely alone. There is no question that if you look at the Israeli mind now and speak to Israelis, they feel they are finally alone. Many attempts have been made on both sides to arrive at peace; since 1967, there have been so many attempts at political solutions. Israel has come, eventually, to the awful decision that the only solution for it is a military one. The loneliness is massively increased by anti-Semitism; the noble Lord, Lord Walney, was absolutely right. Anti-Semitism is so widespread and really affects Israeli public opinion. We need to get public opinion in Israel much more understanding of how so many of us really feel. That, plus the irregular and inappropriate reporting in our news media, is something that we need to think about very clearly. Until that happens, it is very difficult to have better dialogue; with that, we might come to some conclusion where we could have better chances of peace in the future.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: ... I hope the message that has gone out from this House and across the country is that Israel is not alone. The expressions that have been made, the international support and the discussions taking place are very clear that Israel has a right to defend itself. ... I hope that Israel and Jews across the country understand that they are not alone, but we want to ensure a peace throughout the region so that everybody, Arabs, Jews, Muslims, Christians, people of all faiths and none, can live together in peace—if not in harmony, at least in safety. ...

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Conservative): ... When the attack on Israel happened, there was a majority of Jews who were tragically killed by the abhorrent organisation that is Hamas—and now what we also see from Hezbollah. But let us be clear, as one Muslim leader said to me on my first visit to Israel after 7 October, that there were 26 young Muslim attendees at that very festival. Israel has a rich diversity; places such as Haifa and Jerusalem reflect the three great Abrahamic faiths.”...

col 1921 Can the noble Baroness update us on the specifics of the peace agreements to bring about a ceasefire in Gaza? We were nearly there, just before the Lebanon escalation, and the United States was also very bullish in what are extremely challenging circumstances.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: ... The noble Lord’s point about the Muslims who were killed in the October attacks is profound. It illustrates how those who were victims were bringing people together. That is the future: young people, at a music festival, working across faiths and enjoying each other’s company. They paid a price for hatred. To get rid of that hatred ... we have to go beyond the boundaries of our own faiths, not just in the UK but throughout the world, to bring people together. ... Muslims were also killed in those attacks. For the whole region, whatever someone’s faith is is irrelevant; the suffering is beyond any faith.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): Does the Leader agree that, at this time, it is of the greatest importance that we have an independent, impartial media that can provide analysis? ... Does she share my great surprise that, as I was informed by the head of the BBC World Service, the BBC Arabic radio service in Lebanon has now been closed as a result of funding restrictions? ...

Baroness Smith of Basildon: ... We are concerned about that and looking at it. ...

col 1922 **Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** ... does [the Minister] agree with me that the hatred that has come about since 7 October, which has been widely commented on around the House, has to some extent been fed by the BBC? There have recently been two independent reports, one of which I co-signed, which pointed out in great detail mistakes and bias on the part of the BBC. There have been the most appalling statements on the BBC Arabic World Service by people who hate Israel. Does the Minister agree that it is time for an inquiry into the BBC’s coverage? For example, Jeremy Bowen casually reported that Israel had bombed a hospital. This soon turned out to be untrue, but that statement, which he never went back on, gave rise to more slaughter and hatred. It is time for an inquiry into the BBC’s impartiality on this issue.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: The noble Baroness will understand that I am not going to accede to her request for an inquiry, but I think that all news outlets have a duty and responsibility to the truth. One thing I have found difficult in the coverage of this conflict is its focus on the destruction and hurt that have happened; I would like to see some balance around the political efforts to reach a solution as well. That would help people to understand what the conflict is about. I think that many people watching the TV news are obviously horrified, upset and distraught by what they see, but there is no great understanding of the background to it and why things are happening. All news outlets have a duty and a responsibility to ensure that their reporting is accurate.

Baroness Altmann (Non-affiliated): My Lords, what evidence can the noble Baroness point to that there is any desire on the part of the Iranian, Palestinian and other terrorist proxies for a two-state solution? Ever since Israel was founded, their determination has been to wipe it off the map. Israel has tried and wants to live in peace, alongside its neighbours. It was not occupying Gaza or Lebanon, but somehow all that seems to have been forgotten, while Hamas builds its terror infrastructure underneath the schools, mosques and hospitals of its own people, seemingly deliberately to place them in harm’s way, to attack Israel from them and attract Israel to retaliate. Israel does not wish to kill civilians; it wishes to kill the people who want to wipe it off the map. Can the noble

Baroness tell the House what recognition there is that so much of the responsibility for the civilian deaths is on Hamas, which is the aggressor that chose this war, rather than Israel, which is fighting for its very existence?

Baroness Smith of Basildon: In some ways, the noble Baroness has emphasised the point I made a moment ago about people understanding the background of what has happened. It looks and feels at times as if a two-state solution will be impossible, but if we allow that to take hold, we will never strive or make those efforts to achieve some peace in the region. I cannot see any other way forward but diplomatic solutions. She makes the point about people understanding what is behind this; the very first question I answered today was on the attacks on 7 October, and it was because of those attacks that this wall of violence and terror has been unleashed, but there have been similar intentions for a very long time. As the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, said, unless those intentions are dealt with and addressed, we will not see a lasting peace.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-10-08/debates/7E4BDBCA-B893-4C61-9B78-81CA191E52E6/AnniversaryOf7OctoberAttacksMiddleEast>

UNSCR 1701, referred to above by Lord True, can be read at
[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701\(2006\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701(2006))

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UK push for de-escalation and stability during Middle East visit

... The UK continues to work with likeminded partners towards de-escalation in the Middle East, as Foreign Secretary arrives in region to drive efforts towards security and stability, and to press for an end to the cycle of violence which intensified following the atrocities of October 7.

In talks with leaders in Bahrain and Jordan, key regional partners for the UK, the Foreign Secretary will reiterate the UK's concern over the risk of escalation and miscalculation in the region and underline our call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon.

He will reaffirm the importance of working with regional partners to press the case for restraint and will demand Iran and its proxies stop their attacks which are causing chaos and destruction for the region and its people. This follows the UK's condemnation of Iran's actions against Israel last week which risked plunging the region into a deeper crisis.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said: The situation is incredibly dangerous and further escalation or miscalculation in the region is in no one's interests. ...

We must not waver at this critical period to achieve ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon, to get more desperately needed aid into Gaza, and secure the release of all hostages. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-push-for-de-escalation-and-stability-during-middle-east-visit>

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Lebanon (Humanitarian Assistance)

Alex Rowley (Labour) [S6O-03820] To ask the Scottish Government, in relation to humanitarian aid funding through its humanitarian emergency fund, what consideration it is giving to supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance in Lebanon.

The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture (Angus Robertson): The Scottish Government maintains a £1 million per year humanitarian emergency fund to respond to humanitarian crises globally. Decisions

on which emergencies to activate the fund for are based on the recommendations of a panel of eight leading humanitarian non-governmental organisations in Scotland.

As yet, we have not received a request from the humanitarian emergency fund panel to activate the fund in relation to the Lebanon crisis. However, we are extremely concerned about the rapidly increasing violence in the middle east, the high level of civilian casualties and the catastrophic humanitarian situation. We continue to call for an immediate ceasefire on all sides and an increase in the level of humanitarian aid.

Alex Rowley: People up and down Scotland are watching in absolute horror the human pain, human misery and human loss that hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are experiencing across the middle east. Although we recognise the limitations of a devolved Administration, what more can the Scottish Government do to help in this humanitarian crisis and be a strong voice for peace?

Angus Robertson: I thank Alex Rowley for his encouragement to try to do as much as we can. He is absolutely right that we are limited—sadly, we are not responsible for foreign affairs. We are responsible for our external relations, especially in relation to our devolved functions. We have an international development policy as well as a humanitarian policy, and I have tried to explain the mechanics of how that works. I have not yet had a call in that respect in relation to Lebanon, but it might well come. The situation has been developing in recent weeks; perhaps such a call will be made in the weeks to come, and I will look very closely at that.

https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-09-10-2024?meeting=16044&iob=136975#orscontributions_M5119E336P825C2620862

Scottish Government

Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF) Annual Report: April 2023 - March 2024

p45: Gaza

<https://tinyurl.com/2pak7yya>

Executive Summary

<https://tinyurl.com/546fu6vf>

Welsh Senedd Oral Answer

86 Darren Millar (Conservative): Trefnydd, can I call for two statements this week: one from you in your capacity as the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice in order that we can have an update for Members of the Senedd in relation to the action being taken by the Welsh Government to address antisemitism in Wales? Yesterday, of course, marked the anniversary of the terrible atrocities of 7 October 2023, when Hamas terrorists attacked innocent civilians in Israel, and we've seen some horrible events unfold from that date. And it was pleasing to see that the First Minister did issue a written statement to mark that anniversary, but I think it is important that we understand the further action that the Welsh Government is taking to address antisemitism in Wales. It does exist; it is a problem that we all need to work together to crack down on. ...

88 Jane Hutt (Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip): ... it is very important that we recognise today the written statement, of course, from the First Minister about—. It's tragic to say it's an anniversary of those events this time last year, and I have to say, not just the written statement from the First

Minister, I've also written to both our Jewish colleagues in Wales and also to the Muslim Council for Wales. I'm intending to make visits to the places of worship and to meet people again, as I did on many occasions last year. We're extremely concerned by reports of increases of hate crime targeted towards Jewish and Muslim communities in Wales, and I think the main message I want to give today is that we're encouraging members of these communities to report any hate incidents. The Wales hate support centre, which we fund, is run by Victim Support, and we've asked our Wales hate support centre to monitor for any spikes in reporting of antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime, and to ensure that service users are receiving the support they need. So, I'd be very happy to again report back on those engagements in which I'm taking part with those communities affected in the coming days and weeks.

<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/14139#C616916>

The First Minister's statement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-anniversary-october-7th-attacks>

Northern Ireland Assembly Members Statement

War in the Middle East

Cara Hunter (SDLP): October 11 will mark the International Day of the Girl. So many children, girls and boys, in the Middle East do not have a childhood. They live every day in fear amid the ongoing conflict. Yesterday marked the one-year anniversary of the heinous atrocities on October 7 2023, when 1,200 people were violently murdered in utterly barbaric circumstances and 251 were taken hostage. Many of us across the House will stand in solidarity with those families who seek the immediate release of their loved ones. However, the scorched-earth strategy that has been unleashed by Israel since then is absolutely unforgivable, forcing Palestinians to run from death towards death in what is now a hopeless, post-apocalyptic landscape where the entire population has been displaced. Over 40,000 people are dead, which includes the slaughter of 16,000 innocent young children. It is a collective punishment on a population that has been demonised as "human animals".

Not satisfied with the misery that it has wreaked on the people of Gaza, Israel has opened up yet another war front. It has invaded the sovereign nation of Lebanon and now threatens an all-out war in the Middle East of biblical proportions. With over 1,000 rocket attacks a day, the bombing of densely populated civilian areas means that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have already claimed the lives of 2,000 people in the past week. The terror inflicted on Lebanon through lethal bunker bombs has traumatised a population; ended children's education; destroyed roads, thereby preventing evacuation to Syria; killed emergency service workers; and displaced over one million innocent people, with ordinary families sleeping on the streets in fear for their lives. Now, the IDF is threatening the safety of our Irish soldiers and other UN peacekeepers. That is categorically unacceptable. Enough truly is enough.

Under international law, punitive action against civilians is forbidden. I am appealing to the humanity of all Members across the House to condemn the actions of Israel, stand with the people of Gaza and stand with the ordinary people of Lebanon. We must push for a diplomatic solution, call for an immediate ceasefire and join President Macron's call to stop selling weapons to Israel. That must be honoured. If not, I fear that the continued actions of Israel threaten an all-out major war in the Middle East. In addition, the failure of Western politicians to adequately condemn and call out that behaviour risks the complete collapse of humanitarian norms and the sanctity of international law.

I have to reiterate the anger and resentment that I feel towards the US and UK politicians who have stayed silent and abstained on the matter out of narcissistic aims and self-

interest. Although we are a devolved institution, I reiterate to all Members that we have a moral and ethical duty to call out those atrocities and put innocent children at the forefront of our minds when we are decision-making.

<https://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/officialreport/report.aspx?&eveDate=2024/10/08&docID=412367#4581506>

United Nations

Secretary-General's press encounter - on the situation in the Middle East

The nightmare in Gaza is now entering an atrocious, abominable second year.

This has been a year of crises. Humanitarian crisis. Political crisis. Diplomatic crisis. And a moral crisis.

Over the last year – following the horrific terror attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October – Gaza has become ground zero to a level of human suffering that is hard to fathom.

More than 41,000 Palestinians have been reportedly killed, mostly women and children. Thousands more are missing and believed to be trapped under the rubble.

Virtually the entire population has been displaced – and no part of Gaza has been spared.

Journalists have been killed at a level unseen in any conflict in modern times.

And humanitarians – those who have dedicated their lives to helping others – are facing unprecedented, epic dangers.

A record number – including so many members of our UN family -- have paid with their lives.

The vast majority of those killed were part of the backbone of humanitarian relief operations in Gaza -- UNRWA.

In the midst of all the upheaval, UNRWA -- more than ever -- is indispensable. UNRWA -- more than ever -- is irreplaceable.

That's why I have written directly to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to express profound concern about draft legislation that could prevent UNRWA from continuing its essential work in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Such a measure would suffocate efforts to ease human suffering and tensions in Gaza, and indeed, the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory.

It would be a catastrophe in what is already an unmitigated disaster.

Let's be clear in practical terms what such a measure would mean.

Operationally, the legislation would likely deal a terrible blow to the international humanitarian response in Gaza.

UNRWA's activities are integral to that response. It is not feasible to isolate one UN agency from the others.

It would effectively end coordination to protect UN convoys, offices and shelters serving hundreds of thousands of people.

Without UNRWA, the delivery of food, shelter and health care to most of Gaza's population would grind to a halt.

Without UNRWA, Gaza's 660,000 children would lose the only entity that is able to re-start education, risking the fate of an entire generation.

And without UNRWA, many health, education and social services would also end in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

If approved, such legislation would be diametrically opposed to the UN Charter and in violation of Israel's obligations under international law.

National legislation cannot alter those obligations.

And politically, such legislation would be an enormous setback to sustainable peace efforts and to a two-state solution – fanning even more instability and insecurity.

This draft legislation comes as the situation in which Gaza is in a death spiral.

The latest developments in the north are especially dire.

We are witnessing a clear intensification of military operations by Israel. Residential areas have been attacked. Hospitals ordered to evacuate. And electricity cut off – with no fuel or commercial goods allowed in. Around 400,000 people are being pressed yet again to move south to an area that is overcrowded, polluted and lacking the basics for survival. Consider the situation for a family in the Jabalya refugee camp in the north. They were ordered to leave their homes in October 2023. Active operations subsided, and they returned. They were once again ordered to evacuate in December 2023. Active operations subsided, and they returned. They were ordered again to evacuate in May 2024. Active operations subsided, and they returned. And just this month, they were once again ordered to evacuate. The conclusion is clear: there is something fundamentally wrong in the way this war is being conducted. Ordering civilians to evacuate does not keep them safe if they have no safe place to go and no shelter, food, medicine or water. No place is safe in Gaza and no one is safe. International law is unambiguous: civilians everywhere must be respected and protected – and their essential needs must be met, including through humanitarian assistance. All hostages must be released. I strongly condemn all violations of International Humanitarian Law in Gaza. Meanwhile, southern Gaza is overwhelmed. Supplies are running low and Israeli authorities are only allowing a single, unsafe road for aid from the Kerem Shalom crossing, where humanitarians face active hostilities and violent, armed looting, fueled by desperation and the collapse of public order and safety. I have warned for months of the risks of the conflict spreading. The Middle East is a powder keg with many parties holding the match. The situation in the occupied West Bank is boiling over. Now, in Lebanon, attacks – including on civilians - are threatening the entire region. Over the last few days - exchanges of fire between Hizbullah and others in Lebanon and the Israel Defense Forces - have intensified across the Blue Line, in total disregard of Security Council resolutions 1701 and 1559. Large-scale Israeli strikes deep into Lebanon – including Beirut -- have killed more than 2,000 people over the last year – and 1,500 in just the past two weeks alone. The toll has already surpassed the 2006 war in Lebanon. Attacks by Hizbullah and others south of the Blue Line have killed at least 49 people over the last year. Lebanese authorities report over one million people have been displaced in Lebanon – and 300,000 people have fled into Syria. Over 60,000 people remain displaced from northern Israel. Recently, the IDF started incursions across the Blue Line. We are on the verge of an all-out war in Lebanon – with already devastating consequences. But there is still time to stop. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected. Members of our own peacekeeping force in Lebanon -- UNIFIL – continue to carry out their mandates to the extent possible. The mission relies on full compliance by all parties. I want to again express my gratitude and admiration to our peacekeepers and Troop Contributing Countries. The men and women of UNIFIL are serving in what is today the most challenging environment for peacekeepers anywhere. All actors must ensure their safety and security. And we must do far more on the humanitarian front. ...

The conflict in the Middle East is getting worse by the hour -- and our warnings about the horrific impacts of escalation keep coming to pass.

Every air strike, every missile launch, every rocket fired, pushes peace further out of reach and makes the suffering even worse for the millions of civilians caught in the middle.

That is why we cannot and will not give up on our calls for an immediate ceasefire both in Gaza and Lebanon, the immediate and unconditional release of hostages, and immediate lifesaving aid to all those who desperately need it.

That is why we cannot and will not give up on our calls for irreversible action for a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine.

All people in the region deserve to live in peace. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2024-10-08/secretary-generals-press-encounter-the-situation-the-middle-east>

'Indescribable' pain following year of war in Gaza

A Palestinian man living in a refugee camp in northern Gaza has talked of the ['indescribable' pain](#) he has experienced over the past year as the conflict in the beleaguered enclave continues.

The war in Gaza was sparked following a brutal attack by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in southern Israel and has led to an ongoing offensive by Israeli forces against the militants.

Ahmed Abu Aita lost 45 relatives, including his wife and son, together with his family-run dairy and cheese business following an airstrike on 20 October 2023. ...

"The pain of losing my family, my son and my wife is indescribable," he told Ziad Taleb, the *UN News* correspondent in the Gaza Strip.

"I was caught under rubble," he said. "I was crying for help for two days but no one could hear me as this area is considered too dangerous to be in. Finally, a neighbour heard my pleas for help."

"Some of my family members are still under the rubble," he added. ...

Many Gazans feel as if "everyone has been put on death row" since the war began, according to senior humanitarian officer Jonathan Whittall at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"Either they've been killed by bombs and bullets, or they're being slowly suffocated by the lack of means to survive," he said, adding that "it seems that the only distinction being made is at the speed at which you die." ...

A year of "destruction, displacement and desperation" has left all of Gaza in ruins and almost all Palestinians forced out of their own homes, pushed into just 13 per cent of the total area of the Gaza Strip, according to Mr. Whittall. ...

Despite all the destruction and loss of life, Mr. Aita's resilience remains.

"We won't give up no matter what the occupation imposes on us and destroys, we'll rebuild. God willing, we'll come back stronger," he remarked. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/10/1155456>

UNHCR

In Syria, UNHCR's Grandi calls for greater support to those fleeing escalating conflict in Lebanon

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, concluded an urgent visit to Syria on Tuesday to mobilize support for 250,000 people who have fled the airstrikes in

Lebanon and crossed into Syria. ...

“Families I spoke with had run for their lives and have no idea what tomorrow may bring after an exhausting, dangerous journey to the border. They arrive with few means and in need of urgent relief,” said Grandi.

With the main road between the Lebanese and Syrian border posts destroyed by an airstrike, people are obliged to cross on foot with their children and whatever belongings they can carry. ...

Grandi underlined the urgent need to mobilize humanitarian aid, as well as more substantial resources to support early recovery activities as stipulated in Security Council Resolutions. ...

“I appreciate the government has kept the borders open for everyone. Many Syrians have returned to the country, albeit under extreme duress because of the airstrikes,” said Grandi. “I stressed the importance of the government ensuring the safety and security of those arriving from Lebanon. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/syria-unhcr-s-grandi-calls-greater-support-those-fleeing-escalating-conflict>

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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>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3769>

Holocaust Memorial Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3771>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3765>

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-bil>

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

Northern Ireland Assembly: Inquiry into Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Schools (closing date 29 October 2024)

<https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2022-2027/education/inquiries/inquiry-into-relationship-and-sexuality-education-rse-in-schools/>

Northern Ireland Executive: Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 (closing date 4 November 2024)

<https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/PfG-consultation>

Curriculum and Assessment Review [England] (closing date 22 November 2024)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/curriculum-and-assessment-team/curriculum-and-assessment-review-call-for-evidence/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission Code of practice for services, public functions and associations (closing date 3 January 2025)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/code-practice-services-public-functions-and-associations-consultation>

Burial and Cremation [Law Commission] (closing date 9 January 2025)

<https://lawcom.gov.uk/project/burial-and-cremation/>

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