



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answer

#### Digital Technology: Disadvantaged

**Saqib Bhatti (Conservative) [6591]** To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of developing a digital inclusion strategy on the number of (a) anti-Semitic and (b) anti-Muslim incidents.

**Chris Bryant:** It is a scandal that the previous government did not introduce a digital inclusion strategy for ten years.

Digital inclusion is a priority for my department and for government, and work is ongoing to develop our approach to tackling digital exclusion and coordinate across government departments. Digital inclusion means ensuring that everyone has the access, skills, support and confidence to participate in a modern digital society, whatever their circumstances.

Government will work closely with the third sector, devolved administrations, businesses and local authorities, many of whom have already implemented highly successful programmes, to ensure interventions are collaborative and targeted to individual needs.

In developing our plans, we will consider the impact of digital exclusion on all our communities, including Jewish and Muslim communities across the country.

We are working at pace to deliver a Digital inclusion national action plan for publication in early December, we are unable to announce this publicly but want to assure that digital inclusion is a priority for government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-04/6591>

### House of Lords Oral Answers

#### Religious Hate Crime

**The Lord Bishop of St Albans:** To ask His Majesty's Government, further to reports that religious hate crime has increased, what steps they are taking to tackle religious hate crime and strengthen community cohesion in the UK.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Khan of Burnley):** My Lords, religious hatred is a stain on our society. Recent events, such as the domestic impact of tensions in the Middle East and the appalling violence we saw on our streets over the summer, have exposed weaknesses and divisions in our society. This Government are developing an integrated, cohesive approach to tackling these challenges, which will address racial and religious hatred and strengthen cohesion across all communities. We will say more soon.

**The Lord Bishop of St Albans:** I thank the Minister for his reply. Many of us are deeply worried; post the 7 October attacks, the dramatic rise in religious-motivated hate crime and the strain on social cohesion have been deeply worrying. Of course, at the same time they have spurred a whole range of grass-roots initiatives. I am thinking, for example, of the work that our local MP in St Albans has undertaken with local imams and rabbis, who have produced a document—five reasons for dialogue; why Jews and Muslims refuse to hate one another—which they are taking around our schools. It is making quite an impact. I wonder whether the Minister and his officials are aware of this and other initiatives and whether they are being integrated into a national strategy so that we can try to address this at the youngest age possible.

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** I pay tribute to the right reverend Prelate and ask him to pass on my appreciation for the work that has gone on in different faiths to bring the community together in St Albans. I made community visits on Thursday, Friday and Saturday to discuss these issues, and tomorrow I will be in Cambridge visiting the Woolf Institute to hear from Jewish, Muslim and Christian community voices. These important initiatives are all part of a package to make sure that our country rejects hate, has unity and works together to deal with these challenges.

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** My Lords, recent reports have shown that anti-Jewish hate crime in London has risen fourfold and that anti-Semitic activity on campus is absolutely shocking. Jewish students go in fear at what is going on. The noble Lord, Lord Mann, has issued two excellent reports on this, and his recommendations, which I call on the Government to implement, are to teach contemporary anti-Semitism. Holocaust education alone is not succeeding, because it places everything in the past. Will the Government keep our students safe? I have written on this to the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Malvern, three or four times since August and have not received a reply. I hope that the Minister will encourage her to reply to me and others on the painful situation on our campuses.

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** My Lords, I acknowledge the point the noble Baroness makes, in particular on the rise of anti-Semitism in our country. We intend to reverse the decision of the previous Government to downgrade the monitoring and recording of anti-Semitic hate incidents. I will pass the noble Baroness's views across, but I assure her that I am meeting the noble Lord, Lord Mann, who is our independent adviser on anti-Semitism, and I will continue to work with him closely to tackle all forms of anti-Semitism, wherever they may be.

**Baroness Verma (Conservative):** My Lords, I know that as a child, growing up when there is a lot of hatred about really impacts on how you grow up. We are seeing every single day the rise of racial and religious hatred; it has been perpetuated by adults, and it feeds back into children. We need to know how we can work across parties to be able to make sure that, as government and opposition, we are producing an environment in which children can grow up safely, not watching the hate that is constantly on the television, which comes from adults who are magnifying the differences.

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** My Lords, the noble Baroness makes an excellent and interesting point. Today is my 45th birthday; I remember that the first time I suffered racism and religious hatred was on my fourth birthday. The noble Baroness is right: these things stay with you for a long while. Wherever we can work in different

departments and different institutions, we have to ensure that we have an integrated and cohesive approach that tackles the problems that, unfortunately, too many people face.

**Baroness Hussein-Ece (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, the noble Lord is absolutely right that all racial and religious hatred is a stain on our society, but unfortunately it is on the rise significantly. He will be aware that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes have also risen significantly. The violent riots in the summer targeting British Muslims and refugees did not happen in a vacuum. Our families and communities feel worried and targeted, especially with the terrible rhetoric that we hear from some leading politicians that would not be tolerated if it were about other communities. In light of that, what steps are being taken to change the policy of disengagement, particularly with Muslim communities and organisations, and, as the right reverend Prelate said, to enhance and bring back interfaith work, particularly with women, young people and broader communities?

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** My Lords, on the unfortunate stats that the noble Baroness raises, she is quite right. The Question today is about how there is too much religious hatred. Out of all hate crimes, 25% are religious hate crimes. I am working and engaging with all communities, of all faiths, and she can rest assured that that includes the Muslim faith. As I said before, I am visiting the Woolf Institute tomorrow to hear from Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders in particular and to talk about how interfaith—to go to the very premise of the Question—is playing a part to alleviate hate crime and religious hatred in our country.

**Baroness Butler-Sloss (Crossbench):** My Lords, can the Minister advise us as to what the Department for Education is doing in relation to advice to schools?

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** I will just say to the noble and learned Baroness that it is for the Department for Education to better advise her. I am sure that she does not need any advice from me, knowing her experience in this area.

**Baroness Blower (Labour):** My Lords, would the Minister be prepared to meet with Show Racism the Red Card, the country's largest anti-racist education charity? It has workers in schools every day, making sure that our children are exposed to anti-racist ideas, all the better to be able to confront the racism that we see in much of our press and media and, regrettably, that we have seen on our streets.

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** My noble friend makes an interesting point, but let me be quite clear that we have a lot of plans moving forward. I hoped to talk about having these plans in place, but we are at the very difficult stage of finalising our plans. Rest assured that I will come back to my noble friend and the House about some of the challenges when we have our finalised integrated approach. The steps we take will be able to alleviate a lot of the issues that my noble friend raised.

**Baroness Penn (Conservative):** My Lords, in opposition the Labour Party adopted the APPG's definition of Islamophobia. Have the Government now adopted that definition and, if not, why not? If they are still considering the matter, what are the specifics of that definition that need clarification in order for the Government to make up their mind?

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** A new definition, which the Government will work towards, must be given careful consideration so that it comprehensively reflects multiple perspectives and considers the potential implications for different communities. We understand the strength of feeling on the issue of the APPG's definition, and we want to make sure that any definition comprehensively reflects multiple perspectives. We are actively considering our approach to Islamophobia, including definitions, and will provide further updates in due course.

**Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench):** My Lords, the hate crime that captures the headlines often has a political dimension where religions are involved, such as in the Middle East. Although serious, it is transitory. More serious is the hate crime of religion on religion, with claims of God-given superiority. Does the Minister agree that open dialogue

between religions on the actual teachings—I do not mean just having tea and samosas, which is the usual thing—would help identify important commonalities that can strengthen cohesion in society?

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** Yes.

**Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** My Lords, can the Minister reassure us that concern about religious hate should not lead to backdoor blasphemy laws or assaults on free speech and legitimate criticism, or even ridicule, of religion? Does the Minister agree that, three years to the day after the brutal murder of Sir David Amess by an Islamist fanatic, it is not helpful when some conflate concerns about Islamism with religious hatred of Muslims? That stirs up tensions too.

**Lord Khan of Burnley:** My Lords, as I said before, a new definition must be given careful consideration so that it considers multiple perspectives and the potential implications for different communities. We are actively considering our approach to Islamophobia, and that includes a definition. I pay tribute to the work of Sir David Amess. Religious hatred should not be allowed to cause violence or damage, and the Government will work to eradicate all forms of it. On the point raised by the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss, I will speak to my colleagues in the Department for Education to get more clarification.

Recent Home Office statistics show that 71% of hate crimes were Islamophobic or anti-Semitic: 38% of them constituted Islamophobia, while 33% were anti-Semitism. We will look at tackling all religious hatred, and we have to make sure we work on our manifesto to improve monitoring and, I hope, help to alleviate this scourge on our society.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-10-15/debates/2BD4B2B6-1727-47A9-A99C-AE244DA76E08/ReligiousHateCrime>

*Information about the APPG definition of islamophobia, referred to above by Baroness Penn, can be read at*

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>

## House of Lords Written Answer

### Vaccination: Children

**The Lord Bishop of Leeds [HL1258]** To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to increase infant and child vaccination levels in the north of England.

**Baroness Merron:** In England, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) works closely with NHS England, the Department and wider health system partners to improve uptake of the routine childhood immunisations and catch-up children who missed out.

UKHSA's first childhood immunisation communication campaign ran from 4 March until mid-April 2024 and encouraged parents to ensure their child's vaccinations were up to date which. The current campaign is running from 26 August until 4 October 2024.

UKHSA also provides public facing resources, including information leaflets in multiple languages and accessible formats, for example, easy read, BSL and braille, and clinical guidance, including e-learning programmes and training, for healthcare professionals.

To address inequalities NHS England continues to work with national and local partners to deliver faith-based community health engagement with Orthodox Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and other communities in areas with low rates of childhood immunisation uptake. This includes promoting health seeking behaviors, such as general practitioner registration, and designing locally led community

health events to raise awareness of the benefits of childhood immunisations and challenge misinformation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-07/hl1258>

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## Israel

**See also the Lords oral answers “Religious Hate Crime” that are included in the Home Affairs section above.**

### House of Commons Oral Answers

#### Gaza and Lebanon

**col 699 Andy McDonald (Labour):** To ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the situation in Gaza and Lebanon.

**The Minister for Development (Anneliese Dodds):** ... We are deeply concerned about the continuing violence; we must avoid this conflict spiralling further out of control and into a wider regional war, which is in no one’s interest.

The UK was the first G7 nation to call for an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel and for the implementation of a political plan that will enable civilians on both sides to return to their homes. The Prime Minister has spoken with international leaders including Prime Minister Netanyahu, King Abdullah of Jordan, President Macron and Chancellor Scholz to press the case for a ceasefire. This builds on extensive discussions by the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister at the United Nations with regional leaders.

We were gravely concerned to hear that five UN peacekeepers had been injured by the Israel Defence Forces. We reiterate that attacks on UN peacekeepers and UN members of staff are unacceptable. All parties must take all necessary measures to protect all UN personnel and premises and allow the UN to fulfil its mandate. The UK co-signed a joint statement by 34 United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon-contributing countries condemning recent attacks, calling for such actions to stop immediately and be adequately investigated.

The situation in Lebanon is worsening by the day. Civilian casualties are mounting and more than 25% of the Lebanese population has been displaced. On humanitarian needs in Lebanon, I announced £10 million of support to Lebanon to respond to the widespread lack of shelter and reduced access to water, hygiene and healthcare. This is in addition to the £5 million that we have already provided to UNICEF.

It is clear that a political solution consistent with resolution 1701 is the only way to restore the sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability of Lebanon. This requires an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel now and immediate negotiations to re-establish security and stability for the people living on either side of the Israeli-Lebanon border.

While the world turns its attention to Lebanon, we must not forget the situation for the people of Gaza: they are in a truly intolerable situation currently and winter will make them increasingly vulnerable including to communicable disease. All of Gaza’s population now faces the risk of famine. Access to basic services, safe drinking water, shelter and healthcare are becoming harder by the day.

We are gravely concerned by the situation in northern Gaza in particular. Very little aid has entered northern Gaza since 1 October. Evacuation orders continue to be



issued across northern Gaza but civilians are struggling to move to safety and we are worried that the IDF-designated humanitarian zone is overcrowded and unsafe. Israel must comply with international humanitarian law and allow unfettered aid access. The message from this Government is clear: Israel could and must do more to ensure that aid reaches civilians in Gaza. It is unacceptable to restrict aid.

*col 700* We have not lost sight of the destabilising role of Iran across the middle east through its support to militias including Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis. Iran must halt its attacks on Israel. ...

**Andy McDonald:** ... As Israel cuts off northern Gaza from essential supplies, it continues to strike Palestinian civilians while demanding their displacement. The attacks, such as those on the al-Aqsa hospital in central Gaza on Sunday night, show that there is nowhere safe to go. The sight of a patient on an IV drip burning to death in the flames of an airstrike on the tents of refugees will be the abiding image of this genocide. The 400,000 or so civilians left without food or supplies in northern Gaza are increasingly subject to airstrike, artillery and small arms fire from Israeli forces. Some 11,500 children have been killed in Gaza in a year: that is one classroom full of children every day for a single year. In Lebanon, we see Israeli strikes killing civilians, and now we hear that, in addition to invasions of UNIFIL posts—United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon positions—there are reports of attacks on UNIFIL forces of a chemical nature.

... repeatedly calling on Israel to uphold its obligations has no impact. Unless forced to change, Israel will continue to commit further outrages and breaches of international law in Lebanon and the west bank and continue its starvation and targeting of civilians in Gaza. Even Lord Cameron has today talked about individual sanctions for far-right Israeli Ministers. ...

A partial arms embargo has not stopped the attacks on civilians either. Surely that has to be extended. ...

In the interests of protecting civilians in Gaza, I ask the Government to open discussions with the US to remove Israel from the end-use destinations of the F-35 global supply chain. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... my hon. Friend ... referred to footage that has been circulating widely. It is one of many instances of very disturbing footage that many of us and many of our constituents will have seen. ...

*col 701* We will continue to take very seriously our responsibilities when it comes to conducting international humanitarian law assessments in that case or any other such case. ...

We were appalled to hear that UN peacekeepers had been injured by Israeli fire. Alongside international allies and partners, we condemn the attacks on UN peacekeepers. ...

The UK is working with partners to support a path to long-term peace and stability with a two-state solution at its heart. That means a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. We want to be clear: Palestinian statehood is the right of the Palestinian people; it is not in the gift of any neighbour, and it is essential to the long-term security of Israel. ...

**Harriett Baldwin (Conservative):** Palestinians face a devastating humanitarian crisis. The UK must continue to play a leading role in alleviating that suffering. There are still hostages in Gaza, including the British citizen Emily Damari. Can the Minister update the House on efforts to secure her release and the release of other hostages who are in such awful jeopardy?

The previous Government trebled our Gaza aid commitment and facilitated aid flows by land, sea, and air. Will the Minister confirm that those efforts continue? ...

Clearly, resolution 1701 has not been implemented. Hezbollah has mobilised south of the Litani river and fired thousands of rockets into northern Israel. What steps are the Government taking with the UN to secure implementation of UN Security Council

resolution 1701 and get Hezbollah to pull back? ...

Does the Minister agree with Israel's assessment that Hezbollah has built thousands of tunnel shafts next to the chapter 6 UNIFIL peacekeepers? Has that put their mission in such grave danger that the UN must now review its mandate? ...

There is no equivalence between Iran's terrorist proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas, and the state of Israel. Israel has a right to defend itself against an existential threat. But too many innocent civilians are losing their lives or seeing their lives irreparably changed. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... More than 90% of the [Gaza] population has now been displaced, and many people have been displaced numerous times, with some even having been forced to move 10 times. ... all of Gaza's population now faces the risk of famine, as well as many other challenges around water, sanitation and the spread of communicable disease, and of course, as I said, winter is approaching. ... *col 702* I can confirm that the Foreign Secretary has met or spoken to all the families of UK and UK-linked hostages who have been cruelly detained by Hamas, and he has heard at first hand the suffering that those families have endured. ... We continue to raise the cases of UK and UK-linked hostages at every single opportunity. ...

I was concerned to ensure that I saw the delivery of the aid that the new UK Government have committed to, and that included visiting Jordan so that I could see the situation on the ground for myself. Clearly, however, it has got more challenging since then. None the less, we will continue to work to ensure that much-needed aid is received. ...

We are clear that a political solution consistent with resolution 1701 is the only way to restore the sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability of Lebanon, and to restore security and stability for the people living on either side of the Israel-Lebanon border. ...

**Emily Thornberry (Labour):** My right hon. Friend speaks with great eloquence about how completely wrong it is for UN peacekeepers to be attacked in the way that they have been. They put their bodies on the line, keeping warring parties apart, and they were able to maintain peace—a rough peace—on the blue line for nearly 18 years before the conflict began. Is it possible for us to go further than just condemning it?

Given that there are 10,000 UNIFIL peacekeepers from 50 countries and that the full complement ought to be 15,000—Italy provides 1,000, France and Spain provide over 600, Ireland provides nearly 400 and Germany provides more than 100, while we provide one—might it be possible for the Government to reconsider the number of peacekeepers who are sent to UNIFIL, and whether Britain could make a bigger contribution?

*col 703* **Anneliese Dodds:** ... UNIFIL's role is absolutely crucial. It was already incredibly important in southern Lebanon, of course, but it is now even more important given the escalating situation in the region. The UK fully supports UNIFIL's work. ...

I have realised that I failed to respond to the question from the shadow Minister about the Colonna report in relation to another UN agency, UNRWA. To be clear, the UK has engaged substantively on the recommendations from the Colonna report ... and we continue to work on them, including by providing financial support towards implementing the report. ...

**Calum Miller (Liberal Democrat):** ... We need immediate ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon more than ever. Liberal Democrats were appalled to learn of the unjustifiable attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon by the Israel Defence Forces. Israel must stop these attacks and comply with international humanitarian law. The mass displacement orders issued by the IDF to 400,000 Palestinians in northern Gaza, and the ongoing bombings, place the population at grave risk. The international community must press for their protection. ...

Does the Minister agree that now is the time to use our sanctions regime against the

extremist Ministers, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich? Following the Government's new sanctions on Iran announced yesterday, will they go further and now proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... I discussed in detail with the Lebanese ambassador to the UK the need to ensure that there was not only pre-positioned aid but support for children in particular. ...

The hon. Gentleman also talked about those who have expressed views that are inflammatory or even worse than that—remarks that are appallingly discriminatory. The UK Government have been wholehearted in their condemnation of those remarks. ...

Of course, the UK will always keep our sanctions regime closely under review ...

*col 704* **Sarah Champion (Labour):** It feels a pathetic understatement to say that the situation in Gaza, particularly northern Gaza, grows ever more desperate and urgent—particularly as I have been saying that for a year. The UN says that it has not been allowed to deliver essential supplies, including food, since October. Last week, 15 UK and Irish humanitarian organisations warned that the UK is failing to uphold international law and that, without bold and immediate action from the UK, Palestinians in northern Gaza are facing an imminent existential threat. Please, Minister, give us more details on exactly what this Government are doing to make sure that the retired generals' "surrender or starve" strategy is not being implemented. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... There has been engagement at the highest level from the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and me—right across Government—with our counterparts, whether they be the Palestinian Authority, the Lebanese Government, the Israeli Government, other regional actors or the US. More broadly, we are determined to ensure that the ceasefires that are so desperately needed are put into place and that we play our part in facing up to the humanitarian crisis that we see unfolding.

**Kit Malthouse (Conservative):** Even if you care little for the tens of thousands of dead Arabs and the millions displaced; even if you could not give a damn for the children shot in the head or the burning hospital inmates in northern Gaza; if your only concern is the security of Israel, can the Minister see any argument why yet another massacre of Gazans will enhance that security in the future? ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... I want to be crystal clear that the new UK Government have always supported international humanitarian law. That is why we have been clear from the first moment of entering office that we support the mandate of the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice. We reviewed arms export licences—something that the previous Government had not done—because we believed that was a legal imperative. ...

*col 705* **Naz Shah (Labour):** The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel, has said: "Israel has perpetrated a concerted policy to destroy Gaza's healthcare system as part of a broader assault on Gaza, committing war crimes and the crime against humanity of extermination with relentless and deliberate attacks on medical personnel and facilities". The United Nations does not make those claims lightly. Have those assessments also been made by our Government's legal teams? In the light of that, what further actions are being taken to protect international law, life itself in Gaza, and human rights?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... healthcare in Gaza ... has been of considerable concern to the UK Government. That is why we announced £5.5 million of new medical aid to UK-Med to operate its field hospitals in Gaza. ...

**Layla Morah (Liberal Democrat):** Mohamed is a consultant NHS surgeon—in fact, he was mine when I was in hospital with sepsis just a few months ago. His parents are in the Jabalia refugee camp. They are elderly. His father has no colon, and his mother has diabetes. They cannot move, and there is nowhere safe for them to move. If they tried to



move, he tells me that everything is being shot by drones and bodies are strewn in the street. Will the Minister impress upon the Israeli Government that Mohamed's parents, the sick, the elderly and those who have stayed to care for them are not legitimate targets of war, no matter how many times they might have been told to move? Furthermore, if arrest warrants are issued for Netanyahu, as has been trailed, will this Government support it? ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** We are very much aware that more than 85% of Gaza is under evacuation orders. That is causing chronic overcrowding, with people desperately seeking shelter. Last month, the number of humanitarian trucks that entered Gaza was the lowest since the start of the year. ...

**col 706 Richard Burgon (Independent):** In the past few days alone, Israel has burned people alive by bombing a tent camp at a hospital, killed children by bombing a school and fired on UN peacekeepers. We have had a year of this. As a Palestinian lawyer told me, Britain knows exactly what to do, because it rightly did it against Russia after its illegal invasion of Ukraine: impose sanctions on arms, trade and officials. That is how to get Israel to stop doing what it is doing. When will Israel be held to the same standards for its war crimes and violations of international law?

**Anneliese Dodds:** It is very important that the UK takes its responsibilities seriously. The hon. Member talked about some of the reports that we have seen—the UK Government are looking very closely at them and we are determined to ensure that we play our part in ensuring that international law is upheld. ... the UK has already sanctioned eight people responsible for perpetrating and inciting human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the west bank. ...

**Brendan O'Hara (SNP):** Does bombing a hospital and having patients on IV drips burn to death in their beds constitute a war crime?

**Anneliese Dodds:** As I mentioned, the UK Government are looking carefully at all reports. There has been considerable footage that is extremely disturbing—not just the footage that many of us have seen, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but other types as well. It is very important that the UK Government look at them carefully and make proper assessments. There is a legal regime for doing that, and this UK Government take those legal responsibilities seriously because we know the impact that they can have.

**Tim Roca (Labour):** Does the Minister agree that we urgently need a ceasefire in both Lebanon and Gaza, but also, with the grotesque level of civilian deaths, we need international law to be observed and breaches of it investigated properly?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... Let me underline again that the UK Government want an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages still cruelly detained by Hamas and much more aid to enter Gaza. The death and destruction in Gaza is intolerable, and the UK Government were the first Government in the G7 to call for a ceasefire in Lebanon. It is critical that international humanitarian law is upheld, and we take that responsibility very seriously.

**Alec Shelbrooke (Conservative):** Some 60,000 people were displaced in northern Israel, which led to the attacks in Lebanon targeting Hezbollah. When Israel responds to Iran's attack, will we say that Israel should cease fire? If so, why are we not talking to further regional partners to de-escalate from Iran's provocation in Gaza, Lebanon and directly?

**col 707 Anneliese Dodds:** ... We have a responsibility to be a voice for de-escalation and an active partner pushing seriously for that de-escalation.

**Cat Smith (Labour):** As the Minister outlined, the humanitarian situation in northern Gaza is so dire that unconventional means of getting aid into it might need to be considered. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... There are challenges to delivering aid through airdrops—they are not as well targeted and can cause additional problems. It is important that land routes—the most effective way of getting aid into Gaza—are enabled. ...

**Gregory Campbell (DUP):** ... Does the Minister agree that the Government need to try and unite international opinion to get the remaining hostages released and deal with the

terrorist threat from those who want to annihilate all Israelis?

**Anneliese Dodds:** The Government have been seeking precisely to work globally and with countries in the region to de-escalate to ensure that civilians are protected. The UK Government recognise that Israel has the right to defend itself, but we must see a future where, ultimately, we have a two-state solution. Most immediately, we must see a ceasefire in both Gaza and Lebanon.

**Marsha De Cordova (Labour):** While the situation in Gaza is beyond devastating, there have been over 1,400 settler attacks in the west bank. ... What will it take to impose sanctions on settlers and on the settler organisations funding settlers to carry out these atrocious attacks?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... The UK Government's position could not be clearer: settlements are illegal under international law. They present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. During his visit in July, the Foreign Secretary met Palestinians displaced in the west bank. He was horrified to hear of the acts of violence that have been carried out by settlers. The UK Government have strongly condemned settler violence and inciteful remarks, as we talked about before, and we urge Israel to take greater action to hold violent settlers to account and clamp down on those who seek to inflame tensions.

*col 708* **Greg Smith (Conservative):** The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon has failed to prevent Hezbollah's rearmament in southern Lebanon since 2006, sitting idly by while they amassed 150,000 missiles with support from Iran. Those missiles are now being used on Israeli communities, with UNIFIL and Lebanese civilians being used as human shields by the terror group. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... The United Kingdom Government have been absolutely resolute in condemning Hezbollah's attacks on Israel over the past 11 months, which have driven more than 60,000 people from their homes. Those unjustified attacks have brought misery to ordinary people in Lebanon and Israel. ...

**Imran Hussain (Independent):** ... the seriousness of Israel's violations of international law, as evidenced by countless international organisations, could not be more obvious, but the total lack of accountability has led to the international rules-based order collapsing around us as we watch children starve and teenagers burn to death in Israeli airstrikes on hospital compounds. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** The UK Government have been absolutely clear. Israel must act in accordance with international humanitarian law and must take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties. We continue to urge Israel to fulfil its promise to flood Gaza with aid, and we urge Israel to permit immediate and unfettered access for the International Committee of the Red Cross to detention centres. ...

**Richard Tice (Reform):** We all want the killings to stop, we abhor the deaths, and we all want a ceasefire as soon as possible, but clearly the fastest way to a ceasefire is for Hamas to return the hostages, and for Hamas and Hezbollah to stop attacking Israel with missiles. ... The western nations have failed to convince those proscribed terror organisations ... to stop making these attacks. Israel has concluded, therefore, that the fastest way to defend itself and ensure the safety of the region is to destroy Hamas and destroy Hezbollah.

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's characterisation, certainly of the UK Government's leadership on these issues. ...

*col 709* **Clive Efford (Labour):** The situation in Gaza goes way beyond Israel's right to defend itself. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... diplomacy around the humanitarian situation is very important, but we have also been determined to ensure that the UK plays its part in getting that much-needed aid in as quickly as possible. ...

**Simon Hoare (Conservative):** ... Tehran will not let Hamas and Hezbollah stop, and the lunatic right who are propping up Netanyahu will not let him sue for peace either. The western powers and everybody else can have as many conversations and urgings as they

wish ... but they are delivering precious little benefit, apart from more blood, heartache and tears on all sides. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... We have condemned in the strongest terms Iran's attack against Israel. We have been clear that it escalated an incredibly dangerous situation. It has pushed the region even closer to the brink and that cannot be tolerated. ...

**Jacob Collier (Labour):** Does the Minister agree that the rejection of a two-state solution is against the interests of both the Israelis and Palestinians, and that we need a path towards a sustainable and long-term, lasting peace?

**Anneliese Dodds:** I absolutely do, and that has been the long-standing position of this Government ...

*col 710* **Andrew Murrison (Conservative):** Deliberate targeting of UN peacekeepers is always unacceptable, but given the evident failure of UN Security Council resolution 1701 and UNIFIL in intent and mission, what does the Minister suggest Israel is to do when it is facing incessant attacks on its population by a terrorist organisation backed by a state? Is it to tolerate the building of tunnels and attack positions in territories south of the Litani river indefinitely?

**Anneliese Dodds:** The Government's view is that UNIFIL's role in southern Lebanon is absolutely critical, given the escalating situation in the region, but it was incredibly important in protecting people in southern Lebanon before that as well. ...

**Apsana Begum (Independent):** ... My constituents are appalled at the inconsistency in the way in which international law and human rights are applied, depending on who is committing the atrocity and who make up the targeted civilian population. Will this Government finally do the right thing and end all arms sales to Israel, and will the Minister express a simple condemnation of Israel's actions, including the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure?

**Anneliese Dodds:** The UK Government are absolutely clear about the fundamental importance of the international rule of humanitarian law, and about the fact that it must be applied without fear or favour, whoever we are talking about and wherever in the world they are. ... the hon. Member can see that commitment to the rule of law reflected in many decisions that the new Government have made—including, of course, the review of Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law in respect of its activity in Gaza, which led to the suspension of about 30 arms export licences to Israel.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Independent):** ... if we condemn the acts being undertaken by the Israel Defence Forces—the killing of civilians, and the killing of people in hospitals and schools—why are we still supplying Israel with the weapons that enable them to undertake these military activities?

**Anneliese Dodds:** In the repeated messages that we have conveyed to Israeli counterparts, the UK Government have been absolutely clear about the need to take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties, to allow unfettered aid into Gaza through all land routes, and to enable the UN and its humanitarian partners to operate effectively. ...

*col 711* **Paul Waugh (Labour Co-op):** Last week, a UN commission of inquiry found that "Israeli security forces have deliberately killed, detained and tortured medical personnel and targeted medical vehicles while tightening their siege on Gaza", and said that "These actions constitute...war crimes". Can the Secretary of State tell me how the UK Government will hold Israel to account for such appalling conduct?

**Anneliese Dodds:** The UK Government look very carefully indeed at any reports suggesting that there has been a breaking of international humanitarian law. We have been particularly concerned about the situation of many healthcare workers. ...

**Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat):** A moment ago, the Minister supported the current

UN Security Council resolution 1701 ... Emily Thornberry ... said earlier that we could potentially deploy British troops to supplement UNIFIL. Will the Minister ensure that no British troops are deployed into that situation until there is a peace to keep ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** The UK Government have been very clear that it is through diplomatic channels, and also through our humanitarian effort, that we are seeking to do all we can to promote de-escalation. ...

**Florence Eshalomi (Labour Co-op):** I think it is fair to say that calling on the Israeli Government to change their action has not worked and will not work. There are currently three Bills in the Israeli Knesset to outlaw the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and the Foreign Secretary has said in this House that no other agency can deliver aid on the scale that is needed. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... At the UN General Assembly, we were very clear that we supported the mandate of UNRWA, whose role is incredibly important. The Colonna review was important for the organisation, and the UK Government have supported UNRWA in implementing it. We are clear about the fact that it is a critical organisation, not just in Gaza but in the wider region as well.

**col 712 Ellie Chowns (Green):** The far-right Netanyahu Government continue to assert that they are complying with international law, when in fact they are acting without restraint. ... Will the Minister recognise that the UK is complicit in these war crimes due to the UK Government's continued refusal to stop all arms sales to Israel?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... I believe that the UK Government did exactly what they needed to do, legally and constitutionally, in ensuring that there was a proper review operating, with the requirement of international humanitarian law being taken seriously. That led to the decision to suspend 30 arms export licences ...

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour):** The UN has confirmed that it has not been able to deliver food aid to northern Gaza since 1 October, which means that for two weeks, no food, no water and no aid has reached the region. We now hear reports that Netanyahu has a "surrender or starve" plan, which, if carried out, will leave hundreds of thousands of Palestinians without the essentials. International humanitarian law prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** The UK Government have been absolutely clear about our concern for the very large numbers of people in northern Gaza who are in extreme need. We are concerned about the fact that the entire population of Gaza are now at risk of starvation, but the situation is particularly intense for those in northern Gaza. ...

**Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat):** ... The entire region is living in fear, and the death toll is unimaginable. Have we not reached the point where we must accept that continually saying "This has to change" is not enough? ... Ninety-seven hostages have been in captivity for a year, and we need more than engagement and reminders of their plight ...

**col 713 Anneliese Dodds:** ... the jurisdiction of both the ICC and the ICJ is paramount. It is legitimate, and we have been explicit about that. We have called repeatedly for a ceasefire, and we believe that bilateral and multilateral engagement are very important. ...

**Joe Morris (Labour):** ... Can [the Minister] assure me and my constituents that we are evaluating and exhausting every available diplomatic effort not only to secure that ceasefire, but to get much-needed aid into those regions?

**Anneliese Dodds:** Yes, I absolutely can. ...

**Andrew George (Liberal Democrat):** ... I note that the Minister perpetually uses the word "condemn" when she refers to Israel's actions, yet last week the Prime Minister came to this House and said that he stands with the far-right Israeli Government. They are one of the most powerful and sophisticated military powers on the planet, yet only weeks ago we used our military to help defend Israel. Where is the equivalent action to defend the innocent people of Gaza and Lebanon? ...



**Anneliese Dodds:** ... The Prime Minister could not have been clearer in stating that Israel has the right to defend itself; it absolutely does have that right. Israel is a democratic nation, and it is important that democratic nations have that right. However, it is of course important that international humanitarian law is adhered to, and I believe that this Government have demonstrated our commitment to that principle in the actions we have taken ...

**Andy Slaughter (Labour):** ... what further steps will the Government take to stop the barbaric killing of civilians by Israeli forces operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon, with no pretence of following humanitarian law?

*col 714* **Anneliese Dodds:** ... We have a clear commitment, and it must apply without fear or favour. This Government have been determined to ensure that that is the case in Gaza and Lebanon, but there is also grave concern about humanitarian law being broken in many other areas, including Sudan, Yemen and other contexts.

**Monica Harding (Liberal Democrat):** The humanitarian crisis in the middle east is another example of how the previous Government's cuts to the aid budget have left us responding to crises with one hand tied behind our back. Since 2019, official development assistance spending in Lebanon has fallen from over £200 million to just £7 million. ...

**Anneliese Dodds:** I share the hon. Lady's concern ...

When it comes to support for Lebanon, we are determined to do what we can with other countries and international organisations to support those in need. ...

**Debbie Abrahams (Labour):** ... The consistent, egregious breaches of international law by a supposed ally cannot be allowed to continue unfettered. We have to have a more detailed response from the UK and its allies, as we did when there were breaches of international law against UNIFIL. ...

*col 715* **Anneliese Dodds:** ... The UK Government will do all that we can to de-escalate and to secure the ceasefires that are so desperately needed ...

**Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... Does [the Minister] agree that the presence of tunnels within proximity of UN facilities is concerning? It is an indication that the type of underground facilities prevalent in Gaza are being used in Lebanon, and it is a clear indication of the scale of the Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists' reach. We need to deal with the reach of terrorism. Rather than berate Israel, we should support Israel to eradicate all terrorism in the region.

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... The UK Government are clear that it is wrong to use civilians in that manner, and it is really important that civilians are protected. We have seen an appalling number of civilians being killed. ...

**John McDonnell (Independent):** Why do the Government allow to remain in our country Israeli diplomats who advocate a "Greater Israel", and who oppose a Palestinian state and therefore the potential for a two-state solution, contrary to United Nations resolutions?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... particular rules apply to diplomatic representation. The UK Government's position is that diplomacy is incredibly important, given the gravity of the situation affecting Gaza and Lebanon. ...

**Charlie Maynard (Liberal Democrat):** ... Given the disproportionate scale of killing, will [the Minister] please apply consistency to our approach and commit to suspending all arms sales to Israel?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... Above all, we must ensure that those who are badly affected by this dreadful situation are being supported with aid, and that we see the ceasefire that is so desperately needed. I have set out the fact that the UK has complied with our legal obligations around assessing arms export licences; we took that responsibility very seriously indeed. We have debated it thoroughly in this House, and rightly so.

*col 716* **Chi Onwurah (Labour):** The author Howard Jacobson recently wrote that the sustained media coverage of children being killed in Gaza was functioning as a new "blood



libel” against the Jewish people. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the horrendous role that that blood libel has played in the violent pogroms and horrendous antisemitism across history. Will she clearly state that the accurate reporting of the terrible deaths of thousands of children and, equally importantly, the humanising of those vibrant lives cut short by the actions of the Israel Defence Forces are a critical part of the work of a free media in our country, so that our constituents can see the horrendous suffering that is happening in Gaza and Lebanon right now?

**Anneliese Dodds:** Accurate reporting is critical. We are seeing large numbers of images and pieces of footage circulating that are incredibly disturbing, and perhaps for the first time our constituents are able to access this wherever they are, because they can see it on their smartphones, not just on their television screens. It is important that we have accuracy, so that there is clarity for our domestic population about what has taken place, and so that, for example, assessments around humanitarian law can be taken in a fully informed manner. That is how they must be taken legally.

**Claire Hanna (SDLP):** UN peacekeepers, including 380 Irish soldiers, are currently being intimidated and threatened by the IDF, with armaments pointing directly at Irish troops who have protected innocent Lebanese civilians against Hezbollah and the IDF for decades. The IDF has repeatedly violated international law, including around armed conflict, and it treats hospitals, schools, churches and tents as legitimate targets. ... If Israel continues on its current path, when will the UK use the arms trade and the official sanctions at its disposal?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... We are clear that UNIFIL’s role in southern Lebanon is crucial. It has a clear mandate from UN Security Council resolution 1701, and we will continue to support that mandate.

**Melanie Ward (Labour):** ... Physicians for Human Rights-Israel ... with other Israeli human rights organisations ... have warned that the international community must act now to stop Israel forcibly transferring the population of northern Gaza. ...

**col 717 Anneliese Dodds:** ... Already, more than 85% of Gaza is under evacuation orders, causing chronic overcrowding. People are desperately seeking shelter. The situation in northern Gaza is appalling at the moment, and we will continue to raise our concern about this with all the parties, regionally, internationally and multilaterally.

**Clive Betts (Labour):** I welcome the fact that the Minister has repeated the Government’s support for a two-state solution and for an independent Palestinian state. A simple question to the Minister: when? What more do the Palestinian people have to do to convince the Government to follow in the steps of other European Governments and give immediate recognition to that state?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... Palestinian statehood is the right of the Palestinian people ... It is not in the gift of any neighbour, and it is also essential to the long-term security of Israel. My hon. Friend asked about timing. The Government have been clear that we will recognise a Palestinian state as a contribution to a peace process at a time that is most conducive to the long-term prospects for peace ...

**Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op):** This morning we heard that Lord Cameron had done all the preparatory work to sanction two members of the Israeli Government. Could my right hon. Friend say what she has done with that work over the three months that it has been in the Department, and also whether the Government have commenced looking at work to sanction the Israeli Prime Minister for his contribution to these war crimes?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... the UK Government have sanctioned those who have been promoting illegal and violent actions by settlers. ... Of course, we will always keep our sanctions regime under review and we take that responsibility very seriously.

**Peter Swallow (Labour):** Does the Minister agree that securing an urgent ceasefire is a vital first step to securing a lasting peace in the region?

**Anneliese Dodds:** Absolutely ...

**Rachel Hopkins (Labour):** Will the Minister join me in condemning IDF attacks on UNIFIL in Lebanon? ...

**col 718 Anneliese Dodds:** ... We were appalled to hear that UN peacekeepers had been injured by Israeli fire and, alongside international allies and partners, we have very clearly condemned attacks on UN peacekeepers.

**Tahir Ali (Labour):** Yesterday, the United Nations Secretary-General condemned Israel for once again targeting civilians. ... What action will this Government take to stop Israel abusing human rights and committing war crimes?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... The UK Government are very clear about the jurisdiction of the ICC and the ICJ, and we have conducted the review of arms export licences that was needed legally. We are determined to fulfil our legal responsibilities. ...

**Olivia Blake (Labour):** Reports describing the complete dismantlement of Gaza's healthcare infrastructure are impossible to ignore when the World Health Organisation has reported over 1,000 attacks on healthcare facilities and nearly 1,000 health workers dying so far in this conflict. What will the Government do to protect health workers as this conflict escalates, and will they consider sanctions in relation to these flagrant violations of international law?

**Anneliese Dodds:** ... healthcare workers must be protected. We see a very disturbing situation with healthcare in Gaza currently. In particular, we see water and sanitation in a precarious situation across much of Gaza. Winter is approaching and we need to ensure that people are protected there. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-15/debates/F06AD760-7ECD-4216-B0A1-4C778C20927B/GazaAndLebanon>

*The announcement of support to Lebanon referred to above by Anneliese Dodds can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-bolsters-support-to-lebanon>

*The announcement of support to UNICEF for Lebanon referred to above by Anneliese Dodds can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-provides-essential-humanitarian-supplies-to-civilians-in-lebanon-as-the-situation-deteriorates>

*UNSCR 1701, referred to above by Anneliese Dodds, Harriett Baldwin and others, can be read at*

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701\(2006\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701(2006))

*The Colonna Report, referred to above by Anneliese Dodds, can be read at*

[https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa\\_independent\\_review\\_on\\_neutrality.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf)

*The Iran sanctions announcement referred to above by Calum Miller can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-sanctions-against-iranian-military-figures-and-organisations-following-attack-on-israel>

*Information about the "surrender or starve" proposal referred to above by Sarah Champion can be read at*

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1e82yy0wxno>

*Information about the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, referred to above by Naz Shah, can be read at*

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/co-israel/index>

*The announcement of support to UK-MED for Lebanon referred to above by Anneliese Dodds can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-calls-for-immediate-ceasefire-in-gaza-on-first-visit-to-the-middle-east>

The Commission of Inquiry report referred to above by Paul Waugh can be read at <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/262/79/pdf/n2426279.pdf>

Howard Jacobson's comments referred to above by Chi Onwurah can be read at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/oct/06/tales-of-infanticide-have-stoked-hatred-of-jews-for-centuries-they-echo-still-today>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Israel: Arms Trade

**Andrew Mitchell (Conservative)** [7719] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 12 September 2024 to Question 4213 on Israel: Arms Trade, for what reason he decided to suspend export licences to Israel on the grounds that there is clear risk that such equipment might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law, in the context of the conclusions outlined in the document entitled Summary of the IHL process, decision and the factors taken into account, published on 2 September 2024, on the conduct of hostilities.

**Hamish Falconer:** On day one in office, the Foreign Secretary commissioned a thorough review into Israel's compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), given the grave concerns about the conduct and consequences of the war in Gaza for civilians. The review assessed IHL compliance across three areas: humanitarian provision and access, treatment of detainees and the conduct of the military campaign. The review found possible breaches of IHL in the areas of humanitarian access and in the treatment of detainees. The lack of sufficient verifiable evidence meant that we could not determine whether possible breaches of IHL in the conduct of the campaign had been committed. However, concerns regarding Israel's compliance and commitment in the areas of humanitarian relief and treatment of detainees give cause for concern about its attitude and approach to the conduct of hostilities. The scale of the destruction and the number of civilian deaths also cause great concern. The UK's robust export licensing criteria states that the Government will not issue export licences if there is a *clear risk* that the items might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of IHL. Given the conclusions of the review, on 2 September the Government suspended around 30 export licences to Israel, effectively covering all arms exports for use in the current conflict in Gaza, exempting components for F-35 aircraft which, for reasons outlined in the Foreign Secretary's Statement and the Business and Trade Secretary's Written Ministerial Statement, have been excluded from the suspension.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/7719>

The Foreign Secretary's Statement referred to above can be read at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-09-02/debates/F5A06C09-84E1-4788-AF6F-E1560E2B25D3/MiddleEastUpdate#contribution-78DA6459-BB53-4645-8872-CB7C4F535069>

The Business and Trade Secretary's Statement referred to above can be read at <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2024-09-02/hcws64>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### Arms Trade: Israel

**Imran Hussain (Independent)** [6281] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, with reference to the press release entitled UK suspends around 30 arms export licences to Israel for use in Gaza over International Humanitarian Law concerns, published on 2 September 2024, which companies have had arms export licences suspended.

**Imran Hussain (Independent)** [6281] To ask the Secretary of State for Business and

Trade, with reference to the press release entitled UK suspends around 30 arms export licences to Israel for use in Gaza over International Humanitarian Law concerns, published on 2 September 2024, what the value is of each arms export licence that has been suspended.

**Douglas Alexander:** We have suspended export licences for Israel where these relate to items for use in military operations in Gaza. It includes licences for components for fighter aircraft, helicopters and drones, naval systems and targeting equipment.

The details of individual suspended licences contain sensitive information relevant to the individual exporter companies, and therefore the government is not providing further comment on them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-04/6281>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-04/6282>

*The press release referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-suspends-around-30-arms-export-licences-to-israel-for-use-in-gaza-over-international-humanitarian-law-concerns>

### **Hamas: Hostage Taking**

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour)** [8341] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department (a) is taking and (b) plans to take to help secure the release of (i) Emily Damari and (ii) other hostages held by Hamas.

**Hamish Falconer:** We condemn Hamas' continued holding of hostages in Gaza, including Emily Damari and others with UK links, who remain cruelly detained. The Foreign Secretary and I have met all the families of hostages with links to the UK, whose loved ones have been murdered or taken by Hamas and have heard firsthand the suffering they have endured. We welcome the tireless efforts of our partners in Qatar, Egypt and the United States, and fully endorse their efforts to secure a resumption of ceasefire negotiations and a hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8341>

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Tim Roca (Labour)** [8074] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has had recent discussions with his counterpart in Israel on that country's policy on a two-state solution.

**Hamish Falconer:** The Foreign Secretary most recently spoke to Israeli Foreign Minister Katz on 2 October. We advocate publicly and privately the need for a long-term political solution, that will include the implementation of a two-state solution. An immediate ceasefire must be agreed but is just the first step towards a lasting solution to this crisis. We continue to work to support progress towards a two-state solution with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/8074>

### **Gaza: Ceasefires**

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour)** [8315] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with international counterparts to help secure a ceasefire in Gaza.

**Hamish Falconer:** The UK is working in lockstep with our allies in seeking an end to the violence in the region. The Prime Minister has discussed the volatile situation in the region with His Majesty King Abdullah II, Prime Minister Netanyahu, President

Macron and Chancellor Scholz. The Foreign Secretary has also spoken to his counterparts - including Israeli Foreign Minister Katz, US Secretary of State Blinken and French Foreign Minister Barrot. He has also spoken to Lebanon's Prime Minister and previously warned Iran against action that could further push the region to the brink.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8315>

### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour)** [8316] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, steps he is taking with international partners to help increase levels of aid entering into Gaza.

**Hamish Falconer:** The UK Government is very concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza, including the deteriorating access to northern Gaza. As set out in the Foreign Secretary's statement on 2 September, Israel could and must do more to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches civilians in Gaza. The Prime Minister reaffirmed the need for greater aid access in his statement to the UN General Assembly on 26 September. The Foreign Secretary, working with international partners, continues to press Israeli leaders to ensure aid can flow freely into and through Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8316>

*The Foreign Secretary's Statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-09-02/debates/F5A06C09-84E1-4788-AF6F-E1560E2B25D3/MiddleEastUpdate#contribution-78DA6459-BB53-4645-8872-CB7C4F535069>

*The Prime Minister's Statement referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-united-nations-general-assembly-speech-26-september-2024>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Polio: Disease Control**

**Laura Kyrke-Smith (Labour)** [7356] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking with (a) the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and (b) other multilateral organisations to help eradicate polio.

### **Armed Conflict: Polio**

**Laura Kyrke-Smith (Labour)** [7357] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure access to (a) safe and (b) effective polio vaccines in conflict-affected areas.

**Anneliese Dodds:** The UK is proud to be a longstanding supporter of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), having contributed £1.4 billion since 1995. The UK continues to be a supportive partner to the GPEI and will take every opportunity to ensure every child everywhere is safe from Polio, including in conflict-affected areas. The UK is engaging internationally to reinforce the importance of delivering the second polio vaccination campaign in Gaza this month. The UK is also one of the largest donors to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Investing £1.65 billion from 2021 - 2025 to support eligible countries with polio vaccines as part of essential childhood immunisations.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-04/7356>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-04/7357>

### **Israel: Lebanon**

**Mary Glendon (Labour)** [6591] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth



and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps he is taking to encourage a ceasefire on the Israel-Lebanon Blue Line.

**Hamish Falconer:** We were the first G7 country to call for the implementation of an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hizballah and Israel, on 19 September. The Prime Minister has spoken with a number of international leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, His Majesty King Abdullah II, President Macron and Chancellor Scholz, to press the case for restraint. This builds on extensive discussions by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary at the UN with regional leaders. The Foreign Secretary spoke with counterparts in Egypt, Oman and Iraq about our ongoing efforts for de-escalation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8136>

### **Lebanon: Humanitarian Aid**

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour)** [8317] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department plans to increase the levels of aid it provides to Lebanon.

**Hamish Falconer:** The UK is one of the largest donors to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Lebanon Humanitarian Fund and the Central Emergency Response Fund. We have announced £10 million of aid to Lebanon, which includes essential medicine, hygiene kits, fuel for water stations and support for emergency teams. This is in addition to the £5 million already provided to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. UK bilateral humanitarian support for this financial year is up to £31 million. A first shipment of UK aid for people in need in Lebanon arrived in Beirut on 06 October.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8317>

*The announcements referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-bolsters-support-to-lebanon>

*and*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-provides-essential-humanitarian-supplies-to-civilians-in-lebanon-as-the-situation-deteriorates>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **West Bank: Violence**

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour)** [8318] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on tackling increases in levels of settler violence in the West Bank.

**Abtisam Mohamed (Labour)** [8319] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to issue further sanctions against groups and individuals for settler violence in the West Bank.

**Hamish Falconer:** The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. To date, we have sanctioned eight individuals responsible for inciting and perpetrating human rights abuses against Palestinian communities in the West Bank. We have also designated two groups known to have supported, incited and promoted violence against these communities. We do not comment on future sanctions.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8318>

*and*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-09/8319>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat [256] Ceasefire in Lebanon** – That this House expresses its alarm at the escalation of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah; supports steps taken at the UN, including by the UK, to secure a statement supporting an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah; urges all parties to de-escalate and uphold international law, including the protection of civilians; believes that it is important that all those displaced should be able to return home, but that an Israeli ground invasion risks further de-stabilising the entire region; further urges the Government to increase humanitarian aid to Lebanon in light of the humanitarian crisis there; further believes it is not in the UK's interest for Lebanon to become a failed state; recognises that only a political and diplomatic solution will deliver security to either side of the blue line and enable hundreds of thousands of displaced people to return home; and calls on all parties to work towards that solution and a lasting peace.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/62575>

## House of Commons Library Briefings

**UK forces in the Middle East region**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8794/CBP-8794.pdf>

**Israel-Iran October 2024**

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10113/CBP-10113.pdf>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **Foreign Secretary statement on aid to Gaza**

Foreign Secretary David Lammy said: The humanitarian situation in Northern Gaza is dire, with access to basic services worsening and the UN reporting that barely any food has entered in the last 2 weeks.

Israel must ensure civilians are protected and ensure routes are open to allow life-saving aid through. Along with our French and Algerian counterparts, we have called an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council today to address this.

While the conflict continues, all parties are bound by international humanitarian law. Reflecting our concerns – the UK made the difficult decision last month to suspend export licences to Israel that could be used in military operations in Gaza. This does not change our steadfast support for Israel's security.

Along with our international partners, we continue to call for an immediate ceasefire, to allow more humanitarian aid to get in and get the remaining hostages out.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-aid-to-gaza>

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**David Lammy** The situation in Northern Gaza is dire with the UN reporting that barely any food has entered in the last two weeks. The UK has consistently made clear that Israel must do more to get aid into Gaza and comply with international humanitarian law. We need an immediate ceasefire, much more aid in and hostages out.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1846514401525879088>

**David Lammy** Extremist settler violence continues unchecked in the West Bank. Children witness violence in their schools. Farmers are assaulted in their fields. Today the UK has

acted to hold this violence to account. The Israeli government must take serious action now.

<https://x.com/DavidLammy/status/1846198916250734933>

*Information about the UK Government action referred to above – sanctions on various Israeli organisations – can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-sanctions-target-illegal-outposts-and-organisations-supporting-extremist-israeli-settlers-in-the-west-bank>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Israel must stop violent settler attacks on Palestinian farmers that threaten their olive harvest, say UN experts**

Palestinian farmers in Israeli-occupied West Bank are facing the most dangerous olive season ever, UN experts said today.

The intimidation of farmers, restriction of access to lands, severe harassment and attacks by Israeli armed settlers and occupation forces further undermine the food sovereignty of Palestinian families and are yet another attack on Palestinian self-determination, the experts warned.

“In 2023, the harvest was marred by a sharp increase in movement restrictions and violence by Israeli forces and settlers,” the experts said. “Last year, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, faced the highest level of Israeli settler violence, including settlers physically assaulting Palestinians, setting fire or damaging their property and crops, stealing sheep, blocking them from accessing their land, water and grazing areas, causing a record number of Palestinians to be displaced after being forced to leave their homes and lands. Last year, Israel also seized more Palestinian land than in any year in the past 30 years.”

“The olive harvest is central to Palestinian life and culture. The Palestinian people’s relationship to olive trees, which can live for hundreds of years, is also about their relationship to their ancestors and to their future,” the experts said. “Restricting olive harvests, destroying orchards and banning access to water sources is an attempt by Israel to expand its illegal settlements.”

Palestinian farmers, who rely heavily on the olive harvest for their livelihood, face enormous challenges, threats and harassment in accessing their olive trees. In 2023, more than 96,000 dunums of olive-cultivated land across the occupied West Bank remained unharvested due to Israeli-imposed restrictions, resulting in the loss of 1,200 metric tons of olive oil, amounting to US\$10 million.

“This situation is expected to worsen as Israeli authorities have increasingly revoked or failed to issue “prior coordination” permits, which are necessary for farmers to access their lands in certain areas,” the experts warned. “During the 2023 season, nearly all of these approvals were cancelled, and agricultural gates along the West Bank Barrier were largely closed, further obstructing access.”

They urged Israeli forces to refrain from interfering with this year’s olive harvest, and concentrate their efforts on withdrawing the occupation and dismantling the colonies, as stated by the [International Court of Justice on 19 July 2024](#) and reaffirmed by the General Assembly on 18 September 2024.

“Israel is under international legal obligation to first and foremost end their occupation of Palestinian land, which amounts to annexation including through racial segregation and apartheid, immediately cease all new settlement activities and evacuate all settlers from the occupied Palestinian territory. It is also under the obligation to provide full reparation for the damage caused by its human rights violations to all persons concerned, including by returning land, and allowing displaced Palestinians to return to their homes,” they said. The experts said they were following the situation closely and will continue to call for

protection, including through a foreign presence acting as a buffer between the Palestinians and their aggressors, and to protect Palestinian farmers and their families. ...  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/israel-must-stop-violent-settler-attacks-palestinian-farmers-threaten-their>

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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