



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Police: Data Protection

Jim Shannon (DUP) [8823] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department issues to police forces on the (a) recording and (b) retention of personal information on police data bases for hate incidents that are not deemed to be a crime.

Diana Johnson: This Government has already committed to reversing the previous Government's decision to downgrade the monitoring of antisemitic and Islamophobic hate.

It is vital that the police can capture data relating to non-crime hate incidents when it is proportionate and necessary to help prevent serious crimes which may later occur.

We are carefully considering how best to protect individuals and communities from hate whilst balancing the need to protect the fundamental right to free speech. We are also ensuring the police can spend their time dealing with issues that matter most to communities. We will set out next steps in due course.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-14/8823>

Pupils: Bullying

Josh Babarinde (Liberal Democrat) [9253] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of trends in the level of bullying in schools based on (a) perceived differences and (b) protected characteristics.

Stephen Morgan: There is no legal requirement for schools to record and report incidents of bullying to the government. However, the department does monitor evidence on the impact of bullying on children and young people through robust national surveys.

According to the most recent published data from the department's National Behaviour Survey (NBS), for the 2022/23 academic year, 26% of secondary pupils reported being bullied and 28% of primary and secondary school parents reported their child being bullied in the past 12 months. This is shown in the table below. To

note, the total sample size for pupils was 2,521 and the approximate parent sample size was 2,335.

	2021/22 Academic year	2022/23 Academic year
Pupil reported bullying victimisation	22%	26%
Parent reported bullying victimisation	26%	28%
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by gender		
Males	21%	25%
Females	22%	27%
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by SEND		
Pupils with SEND	34%*	36%*
Pupils without SEND	20%*	24%*
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by ethnicity		
White	25%*	29%*
Ethnic minority	14%*	19%*
Pupil reported bullying victimisation by FSM eligibility		
Eligible for FSM	28%*	38%*
Not Eligible for FSM	21%*	22%*

*Indicates a significant difference between the sub groups. Changes over time have not been tested for significance.

The department sees little difference in self-reported rates of bullying by gender. However, a greater proportion of white secondary-aged pupils reported being bullied compared to pupils from an ethnic minority background. Similarly, a larger proportion of secondary-aged pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reported being bullied compared to those without SEND. Secondary-aged pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) also reported being bullied more frequently when compared with those not eligible for FSM.

Across most of these groups, there is a small percentage point increase in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. This is between 2 and 5 percentage points, aside from FSM, where the increase was 10. The department does not know if these changes are statistically significant. The department will publish updated data from the NBS in due course.

Other robust data sources which report on bullying prevalence, and with a longer time series, include the Health Behaviours of School-aged Children Study and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, surveying 10 to 15 year olds. These suggest overall prevalence rates have remained reasonably stable between 2018 and 2023. The department has not made a formal assessment of the links between the level of bullying and impacts on the mental wellbeing and performance of young people in schools, but we are aware of the range of evidence that shows these links. For example, national surveys which show a link between bullying and the impact on mental health include the NHS Digital: Mental Health of Children and Young People in England Survey and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, surveying 10 to 15 years olds. The department also follows the wider academic literature on the impacts of bullying. A recent internal review by departmental analysts identified numerous sources which demonstrate the link between bullying and both mental health and academic outcomes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-15/9253>

Information about the Health Behaviours of School-aged Children Study, referred to above, can be read at

[https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-\(hbsc\)-study](https://www.who.int/europe/initiatives/health-behaviour-in-school-aged-children-(hbsc)-study)

Information about the Crime Survey for England and Wales, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.crimesurvey.co.uk/en/index.html>

Information about the NHS Digital: Mental Health of Children and Young People in England Survey, referred to above, can be read at

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england>

House of Lords Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Charities: Regulation

Lord Wharton of Yarm (Conservative) [HL1425] To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the report by the Jewish Chronicle on 7 August that some UK charities had shown support for terror groups and that the Charity Commission was assessing whether to begin a formal investigation, whether a charity commission investigation has been initiated.

Charities: Radicalism

Lord Wharton of Yarm (Conservative) [HL1427] To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the report by the Jewish Chronicle on 7 August that some UK charities had shown support for terror groups, what assessment have they made of whether the charities Dar Alhekma, the Abrar Islamic Foundation, and other charities connected with them are promoting extremism in the UK.

Charities

Lord Wharton of Yarm (Conservative) [HL1427] To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the report by the Jewish Chronicle on 7 August that some UK charities had shown support for terror groups, whether they plan to refer these charities for investigation by the Charity Commission to determine their eligibility for charitable status.

Baroness Twycross: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave to question HL1170 to Lord Blencathra on 21 October 2024:

"The Charity Commission for England and Wales ('the Commission') has a statutory function to identify and investigate misconduct and mismanagement in charities, and we are confident that it has the expertise to do so effectively. The Commission assesses concerns in accordance with its published regulatory and risk framework, and has a wide range of powers to investigate and remedy the abuse of charities. Any evidence that a registered charity is engaged in misconduct or mismanagement should be referred to the Commission. The Commission has open regulatory compliance cases into both the Abrar Islamic Foundation and the Dar Alhekma Trust, and will determine if there is a need to take action."

The Charity Commission has been clear that the promotion of extremist views in charities is unacceptable, and that it will respond robustly where there proves to have been wrongdoing.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1425>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1427>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1428>

The Jewish Chronicle report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/uk-interfaith-charities-worth-millions-unmasked-as-hubs-of-support-for-terror-groups-vlhbrkan>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-07/hl1170>

Charities

Lord Wharton of Yarm (Conservative) [HL1426] To ask His Majesty's Government with reference to the report by the Jewish Chronicle on 7 August that some UK charities had shown support for terror groups, what steps they are taking to investigate allegations that trustees and leading figures of the charities Dar Alhekma and the Abrar Islamic Foundation have been involved in violent assaults targeting Iranian dissidents in London and supported proscribed terrorist organisations.

Lord Hanson of Flint: The UK Government continually assesses potential threats to the UK and will act where necessary to address those threats. We are committed to tackling those who spread views that sow divisions within our communities and oppose the values we share as a society. Where there is clear evidence that Iranian-linked or aligned organisations are undertaking malign activity, the Government will respond accordingly.

It is an offence under section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to be a member of, invite support for, or recklessly express support for a proscribed organisation such that it encourages others to support that organisation. The proscription offences can attract up to 14 years in prison.

The investigation and prosecution of criminal offences is a matter for the police and Crown Prosecution Service and these decisions are taken independently of the Government.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1426>

The Jewish Chronicle report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/uk-interfaith-charities-worth-millions-unmasked-as-hubs-of-support-for-terror-groups-vlhbkrkan>

The Terrorism Act 2000, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents>

Proscribed Organisations: Prosecutions

Baroness Hoey (Non-affiliated) [HL1389] To ask His Majesty's Government how many people in the past 12 months have been arrested and charged with offences relating to the proscribed terrorist organisations Hamas and Hezbollah.

Lord Hanson of Flint: The Government takes proscription offences seriously. Hamas and Hizballah are both proscribed in their entirety in the UK, with their listings extended in 2021 and 2019 respectively.

Data on arrests, charges and convictions for the proscription offences in sections 11 to 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000 can be found in the quarterly Home Office publication 'Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000'.

Data is not published on the specific proscribed organisation that the arrest, charge or conviction relates to.

The most recent publication up to year ending June 2024, was published on 12 September 2024: Operation of police powers under TACT 2000, to June 2024.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1389>

The Terrorism Act 2000, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents>

Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/operation-of-police-powers-under-the-terrorism-act-2000>

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See also Lords written answer HL1339 “Proscribed Organisations: Prosecutions” that is included in the Home Affairs section above, and Commons oral answers “Iran: Support for Terrorism” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Gaza: Humanitarian Situation

Deidre Costigan (Labour) [900785] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Will Stone (Labour) [900787] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Anna Dixon (Labour) [900794] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Laura Kyrke-Smith (Labour) [900796] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Zubir Ahmed (Labour) [900798]. What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Neil O'Brien (Conservative) [900801] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help bring humanitarian relief to civilians in Gaza.

Catherine Fookes (Labour) [900804] What steps [the Minister] is taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The Minister for Development (Anneliese Dodds): October is likely to see the least aid enter Gaza since the start of the conflict. That is unacceptable. As the Foreign Secretary stated on 16 October, the UK is pressing Israel, alongside our partners, to allow the aid into Gaza that is so clearly needed in this desperate situation, and to enable the UN and its humanitarian partners to operate effectively.

Deidre Costigan: I recently met representatives from the West London Islamic Centre in my constituency of Ealing Southall, who told me that they are deeply concerned about the plight of severely injured children in Gaza who need urgent medical help. Will the Minister outline what work she is doing to ensure that those children have access to the very best medical attention?

Anneliese Dodds: ... We have seen that with the UK public's response to the Disasters Emergency Committee appeal, matched by the Government up to £10 million. She asked specifically about young children who have been caught up and injured. The extent of disease and injury is significant and deeply concerning. We have provided significant support, including through UK-Med for its field hospital in Gaza. Last week, my hon. Friend the Minister of State announced £1 million for the Egyptian health Ministry to support medically evacuated Palestinians from Gaza.

Will Stone: Many residents from Swindon North have contacted me expressing their concerns about Gaza. What steps is the Minister taking to help improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza?

Anneliese Dodds: ... We see people up and down the country who are very concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Clearly, we now have extreme levels of food insecurity. We are very concerned about the situation in northern Gaza in particular. The Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and all of us in the ministerial team have been very clear to all actors in the region and others that there must be access to the aid that is so desperately needed in all of Gaza.

Anna Dixon: Since the devastating Hamas attack on Israel more than a year ago, an estimated 42,000 Palestinians have died, including many civilians, and many more families

have been repeatedly displaced. Will the Minister assure me and my constituents that the Government are using the full diplomatic force at their disposal to secure an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to allow the free flow of humanitarian aid?

Anneliese Dodds: Yes, I can. A resolution to this conflict has been a priority since day one of the new Government. We are calling for 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 we have made that clear at every possible moment.

Laura Kyrke-Smith: ... I am delighted to see the British public's generous response to its appeal. I know that its member agencies are doing everything in their power to get aid to those who need it, but one of those agencies, Islamic Relief, told me yesterday about the situation in Jabalia where people are being "starved, bombed and shot on sight". What conversations has the Minister had with Israeli counterparts to end the indiscriminate attacks on people in Gaza and let in the lifesaving aid that the British public are so generously supporting?

Anneliese Dodds: ... Again, I express our gratitude to the DEC for its work in ensuring that there has been that emergency appeal for the middle east. I should have mentioned earlier that that is covering not just Gaza, but Lebanon and the broader middle east where there is also that urgent humanitarian need. I can reassure her that, on issues of access to aid, the UK Government have been crystal clear on the need for the maintenance of international humanitarian law across the region, which of course includes Israel as well, as the Foreign Secretary underlined at the end of last week.

Zubir Ahmed: Will the Minister reassure me that September's export licence ban with Israel covers items that we reasonably believe could be used to breach international law in Gaza? Will she further reassure me that the remaining export licences with Israel largely do not cover the Israel Defence Forces or military equipment?

Anneliese Dodds: I wish to be very clear as I think there is some confusion on this important point. Following the 2 September suspension, there are currently no extant UK export licences—I repeat, no extant export licences—for items to Israel that we assess might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law. There is only one exception, which is for F-35 components, and the Foreign Secretary has explained that to the House. My hon. Friend is right to say that most licences for exports to Israel are not for the IDF ...

Neil O'Brien: The footage of children caught up in the fighting in Gaza is horrendous, and so is the footage of those who are still held hostage. First, what is the Minister doing to ensure the protection of aid workers in Gaza and Lebanon and, secondly, given that she has just told us that our efforts to get more aid in are not working, what are her next ideas? Where will we go from here, because clearly it is not working?

Anneliese Dodds: We have indeed seen some extremely disturbing scenes. Of course, it is important that we ensure that there is verified information in the fog of such a horrendous war. We have all seen those scenes and been disturbed by them. The UK Government are determined to do all that we can to ensure that aid is accessed by those who need it. We are using every opportunity to do so, which involves working with UN agencies in detail. I have had many meetings with them. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have resumed support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. We have been in close contact with it, the World Food Programme and all others working on this, and we have also been working bilaterally with all our partners in the region. There are a number of different countries working with us to try to ensure that there is access to aid, which is desperately needed.

Catherine Fookes: ... The UN says that all essential supplies for survival are running out. Given the abject conditions in north Gaza, the fact that humanitarian access is nearly non-

existent is unconscionable. A year on from the start of the conflict, we are still debating restrictions on the flow of aid by Israeli authorities. What more can my right hon. Friend do to ensure that people who are dying from hunger, thirst and lack of medical care receive the attention they need?

Anneliese Dodds: I can only underline the fact that the new UK Government are doing all that we can to get aid in as quickly as possible, supporting trusted partners on the ground to deliver life-saving humanitarian aid. As has been mentioned, we have agreed to match up to £10 million of public donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee's middle east humanitarian appeal. That will provide life-saving aid, including medical supplies, shelter and clean water, to people in need, on top of the support that we have released to UNRWA. That aid needs to get to the people who desperately need it, and I refer to my response to an earlier question on that point. We are using every avenue to advance that cause.

Kit Malthouse (Conservative): The images coming out of northern Gaza have horrified many, as has the news of yet more indiscriminate bombing, and many people have reached into humanity's darkest periods for historical comparisons. I do not know which of those is appropriate, but I do know that on each of those occasions we told ourselves that this time was different, yet it never was. Does the ministerial team realise that what they do now is what they would have done then? If they do, do they believe that the conversations that they are having are enough, and if they do not, when will they act positively to bring about a ceasefire?

Anneliese Dodds: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for his question, but he must recognise that from the first day of the new Government coming into position we have sought to do all we can to advance the cause of a ceasefire. On the issue of international humanitarian law, which he rightly and clearly stated as an imperative, we have been consistently clear as a new Government that Israel must comply with international humanitarian law. It must allow unfettered aid access. Our message is clear: Israel could and must do more to ensure that aid reaches civilians in Gaza. We have upheld our legal requirements around that, as he will have seen in relation to decisions taken around arms export licences.

Brendan O'Hara (SNP): Last month, the Minister of State told the House that "we could not be clearer: intentionally directing attacks at civilian objects is a war crime. Those attacks threaten civilian access to power, heating and water supply, impacting the safety and livelihoods of millions of Ukrainians." —[\[Official Report, 2 September 2024; Vol. 753, c. 29.\]](#)

She was right, so why is it that the Government can call out Putin's war crimes the moment they happen, but they seem utterly incapable of doing that when the perpetrator is Netanyahu and the victims are Palestinians?

Anneliese Dodds: ... Surely he can recognise that the new Government prioritise doing all that we can to secure the required ceasefire. The Government have repeatedly conveyed not just messages but action time and again to make sure we play our part, and that has been recognised internationally. The changes we have made around UNRWA, our commitment to the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice, ensuring we hold to our legal requirements around arms exports—that is a Government that are committed to international humanitarian law.

Bob Blackman (Conservative): Intercepted communications demonstrate that Hamas are struggling to find room in their warehouses for the aid that is arriving. What action will the Minister take to ensure that UNRWA actually gets that aid to the people who need it—and we accept they need it desperately—when Hamas are preventing it from reaching the Palestinian population?

Anneliese Dodds: The Government are clear that UNRWA plays a vital role in saving lives in Gaza, providing much needed food and basic services and

supporting stability in the west bank and wider region. Wherever there are allegations or reports that there may have been unacceptable activity—such as that covered in the Colonna report—we have stated clearly to UNRWA that they must be investigated. It did do that with the Colonna report, and the UK Government have supported the implementation of the findings of that report. We continue to discuss that in detail with UNRWA so that it can operate in the manner that it is mandated to do by international law.

Adnan Hussain (Independent): While I appreciate the comments about aid, does the Minister condemn the ethnic cleansing and annexation of northern Gaza under the general's plan, with aid not being allowed in? If so, what action is being taken to demonstrate the UK's strongest objection?

Anneliese Dodds: The UK Government are extremely concerned by the situation in northern Gaza. This morning I was discussing it with humanitarians, as I have been doing just about every day. We really see a deterioration in people's circumstances there in terms of health and access to aid. As I said at the beginning of the question, the fact that this month will likely see the lowest amount of aid since the start of the conflict is unacceptable. We are deeply concerned that we have now seen many people who have been displaced not just once, twice or three times, but up to nine times. We will continue to argue for the need for humanitarian access to Gaza.

Greg Smith (Conservative): ... UNRWA supplies were found in the Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's underground hideout. ... Hamas terrorists are struggling to find warehouse space to store all the misappropriated aid. When will the Government review their commitment to funding UNRWA and actually take action to stop the misappropriation of that aid?

Anneliese Dodds: I refer the hon. Member to my previous response on that. The UK Government take any such allegations very seriously. We have ensured that those are taken up with UNRWA, and with the Colonna report we saw a thorough investigation into the allegations, some of which were proven. UNRWA has been taking action in order to deal with them. It is really important that neutrality is held to, and we as the UK have played our part by ensuring that UNRWA has the funding required to implement those recommendations. ...

Andrew Mitchell (Conservative): Following the removal of the international terrorist Yahya Sinwar and the possibility of an amnesty for those who now release the 97 remaining hostages, what pressure are the Government bringing to bear on Hamas to urge them to lay down their arms and release the hostages, both of which are necessary for full, unfettered access for humanitarian relief in Gaza?

Anneliese Dodds: ... The suffering, especially of the family and friends of the hostages, is indescribable. The Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister have met with them, particularly those who have UK links, and have repeatedly ensured that the release of hostages must be prioritised. They have articulated that message time and time again, and will continue to do so until the hostages are able to return home, as they must be able to do.

Andrew Mitchell: Co-existence is inescapable, and a two-state solution is one day inevitable, as both Israelis and Palestinians are here to stay. Just as the first intifada ushered in the historic breakthrough at Oslo, so too Britain—with its deep regional connections, UN responsibilities and brilliant diplomatic service—has a key role in lifting people's eyes to a very different future. What discussions are the Government having on this issue, building on the significant efforts started under the last Government?

Anneliese Dodds: ... Ultimately, that is the only way of delivering the peace and security that the people of Israel and Palestine deserve. Making sure that we play our part in exercising leadership towards that two-state solution is a long-term commitment of this Government, but of course—as he would expect—we need to show what that can deliver. A huge amount of work is ongoing around

reconstruction, and I have discussed that issue in detail with the World Bank, for example. It has been conducting a survey of the needs that will have to be met, making sure that work is fully co-ordinated so that we can achieve that secure future for those who are in Gaza at the moment. ...

Calum Miller (Liberal Democrat): The attack saw “more than four, five residential blocks...razed to the ground. Some...reached the hospital, some...remain under the rubble.” That is the account of Dr Eid Sabbah of Kamal Adwan hospital in northern Gaza, which he gave to the BBC yesterday. I have noted the Minister’s qualified response earlier, but as the UN special envoy for the peace process warns that “nowhere is safe in Gaza”, does she agree that the UK should now cease all arms exports to Israel?

Anneliese Dodds: ... I urge him to look again at what I stated, which stipulated very clearly the legal grounds for that decision about arms exports. I was clear that the restrictions that have been placed on arms due to that legal regime, which the UK Government were determined to fulfil, are because the other licences are not going to be used in the manner that some would suggest. We are very clear about the need to fulfil our international responsibilities in that regard. The hon. Member also talked about the role of healthcare workers within Gaza, and we pay tribute to all those who have been delivering healthcare. Many are British citizens; the British Government have supported UK-Med, and we pay tribute to them.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/B25B54B1-342C-45A8-A764-F7C5B0E574DB/GazaHumanitarianSituation>

The announcement of aid to the Egyptian Health Ministry, referred to above by Anneliese Dodds, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-pushes-for-middle-east-stability-on-ministerial-visit-to-egypt>

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

Lebanon: Ceasefire

Alex Ballinger (Labour) [900792] What diplomatic steps [the Minister] is taking to help secure a ceasefire in Lebanon.

Mary Glendon (Labour) [900797] What diplomatic steps [the Minister] is taking to help secure a ceasefire in Lebanon.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Hamish Falconer): The UK was the first G7 country to call for an immediate ceasefire between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel, when we did so on 19 September. A political solution consistent with resolution 1701 is the only way to restore security and stability for the people living on both sides of the blue line. We continue to press for that with vigour and urgency with our international counterparts. The Foreign Secretary did so last week, and so did I. We will continue to do so this week and every day.

Alex Ballinger: We are appalled by the increase in violence after Israel’s ground invasion of Lebanon. As somebody who used to work in Beirut when the country welcomed a million Syrian refugees, it is upsetting to see people on the move again after so much violence. I thank the Foreign Secretary for his diplomatic efforts so far. Does the Minister agree that there is no military solution to the conflict in Lebanon? Will he outline again in more detail what diplomatic efforts he is making to ensure that we have a ceasefire so that Lebanese and Israeli civilians can return to their homes?

Hamish Falconer: We agree very much. Only a political solution will enable

Lebanese civilians to return to their homes and Israeli civilians to return to the north of Israel. Clearly Hezbollah has been conducting terrible attacks on northern Israel for a long time—from 8 October, which was a terrible day to choose to start. We are working with all our allies on a plan based around resolution 1701. We talk regularly with all the key players in the region and in particular with Amos Hochstein, the US envoy working on a proposal to achieve the effect of 1701. We will continue to do so.

Mary Glendon: The reported attacks on United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon bases by the Israel Defence Forces show disregard for resolution 1701 and the existing diplomatic framework for peace. Last week's joint statement by Foreign Ministers and our allies condemning all the threats to UNIFIL's security was welcome, so can the Foreign Minister tell the House what discussions he has had with Israeli political leaders to supplement that action? Were they productive?

Hamish Falconer: ... We are absolutely clear that attacks by the IDF on UNIFIL bases must stop, and they must stop immediately. We have called on Israel to that effect. We have called on all parties to uphold their obligations in ensuring the safety and security of UNIFIL personnel. I am sure that many in this House will be looking each day at the reports from UNIFIL on the situation there. As I have said in answer to previous questions, only a political solution consistent with UN Security Council resolution 1701 can restore stability and security. We continue to raise these matters with the Israelis at every level, and I will continue to do so this week.

Andrew Murrison (Conservative): UNIFIL and UN Security Council resolution 1701 plainly have not prevented the construction of tunnels and forward attack positions by Iranian proxies south of the Litani river. What discussions will the Foreign Secretary be having with the United Nations to ensure that something is put in place to replace 1701, to strengthen the role of UNIFIL and prevent aggressive action by Hezbollah and its fellow travellers?

Hamish Falconer: The first thing we have to do is get Hezbollah back north of the Litani river, consistent with 1701. We should not move away from 1701 until we have made progress under it. I recognise the force of what the right hon. Gentleman says about the concerns about Hezbollah's presence close to the Israeli border, in breach of UN Security Council resolutions. I condemn the attacks, including the missile strikes that have been happening since 8 October, and all the other violence that Lebanese Hezbollah has been responsible for. It is proscribed under UK law and we hold no truck with it, but the way to get Hezbollah away from the border is 1701, and that is what we have to stick to.

Monica Harding (Liberal Democrat): Finn Pugh, who is eight years old and is one of my constituents, wrote to me. He said: "Lebanon is a wonderful place. It does not deserve this. I would like the Government to protect the people of Lebanon and give them supplies like food and water." What reassurances can the Minister give Finn?

Hamish Falconer: ... Over the course of the past few weeks, we have announced £15 million of aid for the people affected by the strikes in Lebanon and those who are now crossing towards Syria, which is a concerning development in the conflict. Finn is right to have the people of Lebanon in his mind, and we are doing all we can to try to ensure that the humanitarian system in Lebanon can support the people Finn is concerned about. ...

Emily Thornberry (Labour): The new Government's call for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and in Gaza is, of course, greatly welcomed. However, today we hear that one of UNIFIL's watchtowers was bombed by the Israel Defence Forces. First, was that one of the watchtowers that we have provided? Secondly, what conversations has the Minister had with his colleagues about beefing up our support to UNIFIL and taking our troop numbers up from one?

Hamish Falconer: I will have to write to my right hon. Friend about the specific

watchtower and whether we have provided any aid. Underlying her point, I think, is a question about what we do when our statements about UNIFIL are not abided by. Let me be clear with the House: the current situation is unsustainable, and we continue to raise the matter through all diplomatic measures and will do so until there is progress. I can perhaps write to my right hon. Friend about our future plans regarding peacekeepers in Lebanon.

Graham Stuart (Conservative): There is only one route to sustained peace in Lebanon, and that is for the UN and the Lebanese state to stop Hezbollah carrying out its operations. That's right, isn't it?

Hamish Falconer: We agree that Lebanese Hezbollah should not be conducting the actions that it has been conducting. As I said in response to the previous question, this situation needs to be resolved in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions. If the right hon. Gentleman is asking me whether we think what Lebanese Hezbollah is doing across the blue line is correct or justifiable, my answer is that it is not. We call on it, as we have always called on it, to stop. We have proscribed the organisation domestically and have absolutely no truck with it whatsoever. Iran's malign influence in Lebanon must stop, and we are taking actions to try to effect that.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/88322843-0F54-4585-8256-E22524EBBB22/LebanonCeasefire>

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

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Jon Pearce (Labour) [900810] In 2020, the US committed £250 million to support peace building and Palestinian economic development. Will the Minister consider how we can work with our partners in the US, using our world-leading development expertise and our experience in conflict resolution in Northern Ireland, to take a lead in this vital work?

Hamish Falconer: My hon. Friend asks an important question. Peace building at a civil society level has an important role to play in trying to resolve this conflict. I will write to him with details of our plans.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/D99C7846-D9F6-456D-90D0-3B149BE9CF95/TopicalQuestions#contribution-11DC4557-3DFA-422B-B988-1E4839FAAD76>

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Fabian Hamilton (Labour) [900812] It is estimated that more than 42 million tonnes of rubble could be contaminated by unexploded bombs and ordnance in Gaza. It is vital that such a serious threat to human life is dealt with effectively to ensure Gaza's post-conflict reconstruction. Will the Minister commit to redoubling our country's support for the work of organisations such as the HALO Trust?

Anneliese Dodds: The amount of unexploded remnants of war throughout Gaza poses a serious threat to life and the provision of humanitarian assistance. The UK is working proactively with a number of key stakeholders. We very much recognise the expertise of the HALO Trust, and we will redouble the work done, particularly towards reconstruction.

Richard Holden (Conservative) [900811] Hezbollah continues to use Lebanese civilians as human shields. On Friday, the caretaker Prime Minister in Lebanon accused Iran of blatant interference in Lebanese affairs. What more will the Minister do to help ensure that both Israeli and Lebanese counterparts can face down the threat from Iran?

Hamish Falconer: I referred to our actions against Iran in the region, and the

importance of removing its influence in Lebanon as best we can. This week I will attend the Lebanon conference in Paris, where these matters will be discussed.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/D99C7846-D9F6-456D-90D0-3B149BE9CF95/TopicalQuestions#contribution-0A2C8B55-4F2F-47F0-9469-6BE028396CCF>

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Tom Morrison (Liberal Democrat) [900816] Winter is now approaching the northern hemisphere, and many civilians in Palestine and Lebanon are without homes, water and electricity. What are the Government doing to support winterisation efforts in the region?

Anneliese Dodds: ... Many displaced people have very few of the clothes and belongings that they desperately need, particularly given that the threat of winter and much worse weather is coming speedily down the track. The Government have been discussing the issue with many of our partners.

Steve Yemm (Labour) [900814] What update can the Minister give us on UK support for the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace? Will the Government convene a summit of international partners to ensure that civil society is at the heart of peace building in the coming years in the region?

Hamish Falconer: I refer my hon. Friend to my previous answer. I will also write to him with further details of what we will do.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/D99C7846-D9F6-456D-90D0-3B149BE9CF95/TopicalQuestions#contribution-A1BED21E-E847-4A9E-B673-701B77C84C99>

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat): What discussions have Ministers had with their Israeli counterparts about the application of distinction and proportionality in international humanitarian law?

Hamish Falconer; The Foreign Secretary has set out our views on the Israeli application of international humanitarian law at greatest length in relation to the decision to suspend arms licences. We keep those issues under regular review and will update the House if there is a change in our assessment.

Imran Hussain (Independent): As we have heard again today in the Chamber, war crimes in Gaza continue, making it clear that the time for empty promises and hollow words is over. Does the Minister agree that the international community must finally fulfil its responsibility and take real action, starting with immediate sanctions on the hard-right extreme Ministers in the Netanyahu Government?

Hamish Falconer; I hope Members recognise that the words that we have been speaking at this Dispatch Box have not been hollow. Since coming into government, we have restored funding to UNRWA. We have also taken steps in the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, and in relation to the arms suspension that I referred to a moment ago. As for the far-right settlers to whom I think my hon. Friend was referring, we introduced sanctions last Thursday. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear during Prime Minister's questions that we continue to review these issues, and we will return to the House.

Gregory Campbell (DUP): The outgoing President of the United States has indicated that he has been told where and when the Israeli Government will respond to the Iranian terror threat. Have our Government been informed?

Hamish Falconer; I think that you, Mr Speaker, and other Members will understand that it is not appropriate to comment on that in the House.

Naz Shah (Labour): As the Minister will know, the ICJ has ruled that member states such as the UK are obliged to distinguish in their dealings between green-line Israel and occupied territory. In line with that ruling, as well as obligations under United Nations

Security Council resolution 2334, what steps are the Government taking to address the issue of products entering the UK from illegal settlements?

Hamish Falconer; I will write to my hon. Friend about the complex issue of trade with Israel and how we make that distinction, if that is okay.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/D99C7846-D9F6-456D-90D0-3B149BE9CF95/TopicalQuestions#contribution-D1F0166D-1FE6-4E34-B237-0D73763C0168>

UNSCR 2334, referred to above by Naz Shah, can be read at
[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2334\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2334(2016))

Topical Questions: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Sarah Champion (Labour): Even before the start of the current conflict in Gaza, 98,000 children there had a disability. Thousands more have now been horrifically injured, and those with long-term conditions have not received any medical support. While I welcome the Government's commitment to facilitating medical evacuations, how is that possible when Israel is controlling the Rafah crossing?

Anneliese Dodds: ... We are of course determined to do all that we can for the wellbeing and safety of children in Gaza, in partnership with other countries. She raises the issue of healthcare; we have been supporting UK-Med and other organisations in that regard, and also in respect of education. Many children have been out of school for a year, and we are determined to rectify the situation.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/D99C7846-D9F6-456D-90D0-3B149BE9CF95/TopicalQuestions#contribution-02EEF82C-5DAC-4F0C-B959-8E667956D5E6>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Sanctions

Brendan O'Hara (SNP) [9469] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he (a) has made an assessment and (b) plans to make an assessment of the potential merits of imposing sanctions on individual members of the Israeli cabinet.

Hamish Falconer: The UK government condemns the unacceptable language that has been used by Israeli ministers Smotrich and Ben-Gvir. Israel should condemn this language and clamp down on the actions of those who seek to inflame tensions. The UK government does not speculate about possible future sanctions designations, as to do so could reduce their impact.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-16/9469>

Israel: Arms Trade

Tracy Gilbert (Labour) [9378] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to his oral statement of 2 September 2024 on Middle East Update, Official Report, column 37, whether his Department has undertaken a further review of export licenses.

Hamish Falconer: Export licence applications continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria. The UK's robust export licensing criteria state 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 International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Following our review into Israel's compliance with IHL in Gaza, this Government has concluded that a *clear risk does exist*, and we have suspended certain export licences for items that could be used in the current conflict in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-15/9378>

The 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 Criteria referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

Palestinians

Imran Hussain (Independent) [900800] What steps he is taking to support the International Criminal Court investigation into the situation in the state of Palestine.

Hamish Falconer: The UK is fully committed to international law. We respect the independence of the International Criminal Court, and respect their independence in investigating the situation in Israel and the OPTs. UK practical support to the ICC includes: witness protection; sentence enforcement; commitment to the ICC's reform process; and secondment of staff. The UK is also one of the Court's major funders, providing support of £13.2 mill to the ICC's annual (2024) budget. This Government is clear that International Humanitarian Law must be upheld, and civilians protected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-16/900800>

Israel: Occupied Territories

Naz Shah (Labour) [900805] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Hamish Falconer: The UK is fully committed to international law and fully respects the independence of the International Court of Justice. We continue to consider the Court's Advisory Opinion carefully. We do not disagree with the central findings of the Court's Advisory Opinion. We are of the clear view that Israel should bring an end to its presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as rapidly as possible – but we are clear that every effort must be made to create the conditions for negotiations towards the two-state solution. Our commitment to a two-state solution is unwavering. The UK abstained on the UN General Assembly resolution in September because it did not provide sufficient clarity to advance a negotiated two-state solution.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-16/900805>

The International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion referred to above can be read at

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf>

UN Interim Force in Lebanon: Hezbollah

Gregory Campbell (DUP) [9696] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his UN counterparts on allegations that United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) officials were aware of Hezbollah activity in close proximity to UNIFIL bases in southern Lebanon.

Hamish Falconer: The Government supports the essential role played by UNIFIL in southern Lebanon and recognises that the mission is working in difficult circumstances. In a call on 16 October with the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the Foreign Secretary discussed concern at UNIFIL not being able to access all relevant locations north of the de-facto border between Lebanon and Israel and called for all parties to ensure freedom of movement for UNIFIL personnel. We continue to speak with counterparts from the UN on a range of

issues related to the on-going conflict. The Government will continue to underscore the importance of the UN in resolving armed conflict and mitigating the humanitarian impact.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-17/9696>

Downing Street

Keir Starmer Today @AngelaRayner and I met members of the Palestinian community in the UK who have lost loved ones in Gaza, alongside Dr Husam Zomlot, Head of the Palestinian mission to the UK. I am humbled by their immeasurable grief. This horrific suffering must end, there must be an immediate ceasefire, and Israel must let unrestricted aid into Gaza now. [plus photo]

https://x.com/Keir_Starmer/status/1848778863519928415

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Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Iran: Support for Terrorism

Jonathan Davies (Labour) [900786] What steps [the Minister's] Department is taking to counter Iranian support for terrorism.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Hamish Falconer): The Foreign Office works closely with our allies and partners to counter Iran's support for proscribed groups, which include Hamas—as many Members have mentioned—as well as Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. We currently have over 400 sanctions in place on Iran in response to its human rights violations, nuclear escalation and terrorism. We also continue to hold Iran publicly accountable for its direct support of terrorism, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did in his intervention at the Security Council on 25 September.

Jonathan Davies: Iran's malign activity and support for its proxies is destabilising the middle east. Does the Minister agree that this must end, and will he say a little more about what steps he is taking?

Hamish Falconer: I do agree. In all of our efforts in the region, we are clear that Hamas and the other Iranian proxies that are doing so much to destabilise the region must stop. We are working with our allies to that effect, including by reviewing new measures that we can take.

Suella Braverman (Conservative): For years, the Foreign Secretary and the Labour party have promised to proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the chief sponsor of global terrorism. Are the Government going to take action to tackle terrorism and extremism in the UK, or are they going to break yet another promise?

Hamish Falconer: As I understand the question from the former Home Secretary, she is saying that when she was Home Secretary she did not proscribe the IRGC, but she thinks we should have done so within 100 days. I say to my hon. Friends that we will take the necessary steps in the UK to prevent the IRGC from taking action on these streets, but as she knows well, we do not comment on whether an organisation is under consideration for proscription in the normal way.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-10-22/debates/61488742-BAD4-4F6F-A13E-6FE4F158E349/IranSupportForTerrorism>

House of Commons Written Answer

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Luke Akehurst (Labour) [9836] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she has taken to disrupt the activity of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in the UK.

Dan Jarvis: We do not routinely comment on the detail of operational matters or specific threats. But national security is the first duty of any government, and we take any malicious activity that might pose a significant threat to our security and public safety extremely seriously.

Iran's malign activity, including the activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The UK has more than 450 sanctions designations in place on Iranian individuals and entities, in response to the regime's human rights violations, nuclear weapons programme, malign influence internationally and state threats. The UK has also sanctioned the IRGC in its entirety, with the IRGC Intelligence Chief most recently being sanctioned this month.

The National Security Act 2023 provides a significant toolkit for our intelligence services and law enforcement agencies in the fight against state threats. This means that the UK is now a harder target for those states which seek to conduct hostile acts against the UK, including espionage, interference in our political system, sabotage and assassination.

In concert with partners, the UK Government will continue to use all tools at our disposal to protect the UK and its overseas interests against any threats from the Iranian state.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-17/9836>

The National Security Act 2023, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/32/contents>

House of Lords Written Answers

Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) [HL1357] To ask His Majesty's Government what priority they place on the promotion of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief; and whether and when they intend to appoint a new Special Envoy to ensure that Article 18 forms an important part of their cross-departmental policies.

Lord Collins of Highbury: Recognising that human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, this Government will champion freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. No one should live in fear because of what they do, or do not believe in. Envoy roles are under Ministerial consideration and will be decided upon in due course. In the meantime, we continue to use the strength of our global diplomatic network, including dedicated staff within the FCDO, to promote and protect human rights, including FoRB, around the world.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1357>

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/03/udhr.pdf>

Religious Freedom

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) [HL1358] To ask His Majesty's Government in which countries people are discriminated against or suffer persecution because of their

religion or belief; and what is their estimate of the total number of people affected.

Lord Collins of Highbury: Many people are frequently discriminated against on the basis of religion or belief in many countries. The latest Pew Research Center study reports that in 2021, government restrictions on religion reached a new peak globally. Religious or belief groups faced harassment by governments in 183 countries, and governments interfered in worship in 163 countries. The UK government seeks to address the severity and scale of violations and abuses of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), all over the world. We do this multilaterally, by coordinating with partners at fora such as the UN to promote FoRB, and bilaterally through our diplomatic network.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1358>

The Pew Research Center study referred to above can be read at

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2024/03/05/globally-government-restrictions-on-religion-reached-peak-levels-in-2021-while-social-hostilities-went-down/>

Refugees: Religious Freedom

Lord Alton of Liverpool (Crossbench) [HL1360] To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of the percentage of the 120 million people who are refugees or displaced worldwide, who have been forced to leave their homes because of, as one of the factors, Article 18 violations involving persecution against them on grounds of religion or belief.

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK government does not track or estimate the proportion of people forcibly displaced due to persecution on grounds of religion or belief. The UK government is committed to upholding and promoting human rights, including freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) for all. We continue to highlight the severity and scale of violations and abuses of FoRB all over the world. We do this multilaterally, by coordinating with partners at fora such as the UN to promote FoRB, and bilaterally through our diplomatic network.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-10-08/hl1360>

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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>

Exemption from Value Added Tax (Listed Places of Worship)

Bill homepage not yet online

Holocaust Memorial Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition)

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) (No. 2)

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3796>

Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3803>

Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3774>

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

**** closes in 6 days**

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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