SCoJeC
Scottish Council of Jewish Communities
Representing, connecting, and supporting Jewish people in Scotland

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Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Death Certificates

Helen Whately (Conservative) [31062] To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to review the (a) capacity and (b) efficiency of the medical examiner system in the new death certification process.

Ashley Dalton: The Government is monitoring the impact of the death certification reforms, which came into legal effect on 9 September 2024. Early data indicates the median time taken to register a death appears to have risen by one day, from seven days to eight days. This figure is for all deaths, as it includes those certified by a doctor and those investigated by a coroner. The average time taken to register has increased further over the Christmas weeks, but this was expected given increases are observed during this period every year, and the average is expected to decrease again as more data becomes available for January and February 2025. The Department does not hold data on what was the longest period between a death and its registration since September 2024.

The median time taken to register a death varies depending on the type of certification. Deaths certified by a doctor, that comprise approximately 80% of deaths registered each week, have typically had a median time to registration of seven days, though there can be variation at a local level. It's important to note that the medical examiner system was active on a non-statutory basis before the introduction of the statutory system on 9 September 2024, and this makes direct 'before' and 'after' comparisons challenging to draw conclusions from.

The core purposes of the death certification reforms are to introduce scrutiny of the cause of death, to detect and deter malpractice, to improve reporting, and crucially to put the bereaved at the centre of the process by offering a conversation with the medical examiner about the cause of death. The expectation on doctors and medical examiners is clear, that they should complete certification as quickly and efficiently as possible, and the Government is working with all stakeholders to make sure this is the case.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-12/31062

Summer 2024 disorder

Q49 **Chair (Karen Bradley, Conservative):** … Chief Constable Kennedy… you believed at the time that the organised far right was responsible for the Southport disorder. Is that still your assessment and was that different from the disorder that you saw in Liverpool itself?

Chief Constable Serena Kennedy (Merseyside Police): … We were … monitoring a number of social media feeds and intelligence coming in. There was commentary around the person who was responsible or who was in custody for those murders. Some of those social media chats that were taking place were on what we would associate with far-right social media channels. …

It is not as simple as saying that everybody was called to go to Southport on the evening of the 30th, but that information was being passed through some far-right channels, as well as other channels and some channels that we did not have access to. There was definitely an element of far right to it. …

Q50 **Chief Constable Kennedy:** In terms of Liverpool … there were two clear groupings that we would associate with what we would suggest was a left-wing protest, a counter-protest, and then a right-wing group involved in initially what I would suggest was peaceful protest. …

Q51 **Chief Constable Kennedy:** If I can take you back to the events of 30 July, we were planning for a community event. … this was a community that was grieving. …

We saw about 1,000 people come together to attend that vigil. … We were planning for a community event. Officers were dressed appropriately to police what was a community event. While the vigil was taking place, we did see some people within that vigil, approximately 70 people, who I would suggest were clearly not there for the vigil.

The vigil ended and those approximately 70 people left that vigil and grouped outside Southport town hall. They moved up towards the mosque … The officers did a brilliant job getting a ring, a line around the mosque to protect them, because we knew there were people in the mosque. Within seven minutes of arriving at that location, the first acts of violence and criminal damage took place. …

That situation very quickly escalated, as I say, seven minutes from those people arriving at the mosque, absolutely intent, in my view, on getting inside the mosque, injuring the people inside it and committing acts of criminal damage. …

Q52 **Joani Reid (Labour):** … I want to move on to information about the suspect and how that was communicated. In the immediate aftermath of the murders, did you receive clear guidance and advice from the CPS about the communications of the man you had in custody?

Chief Constable Kennedy: … We released, in line with what we would always say, the age of the person who was in custody, the area they were from … and where they had been arrested. That information was released by Merseyside Police without consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service. That is standard practice as to what we would release. …

Clearly some of the disinformation was out there on 29 July that the person we had in custody was an asylum seeker. On my first press release on the evening of Monday, 29 July, we knew that the suspect at that time had moved to the north-west from Cardiff, but what we did not know was whether he was born in Cardiff or not. At my first press release I said that he was originally from Cardiff, but within several hours of doing that press conference we knew that he had been born in Cardiff so my statement was updated to say that he was born in Cardiff. Again, that was not done in consultation with the CPS. …

The response back from national CPS was around being mindful of what information we release about the suspect, bearing in mind contempt. We sent over a copy of what we

wanted to put out in a press release, which included the religion of the suspect and the religion of the suspect's parents. …

The deputy branch Crown prosecutor attended at Merseyside Police headquarters with their head of local comms and we had about a 90-minute discussion, all around wanting to put the religion in the statement. I explained why. … However, there were real concerns around me putting the religion into my press statement. It was very clear within that 90-minute conversation that the Crown Prosecution Service locally was very unhappy at our suggestion of including that. Based on that advice, we did not include the suspect's religion in my press statement …

I am subsequently aware that national CPS did email back … to say that they were happy for us to include the religion, but … that was not seen by ourselves. …

Q54 **Joani Reid:** … you have said subsequently that ideally you would have liked to have released more information about the Southport murders. Were you thinking specifically about the publication of the religion of the suspect?

Chief Constable Kennedy: Initially, I wanted to give that information because obviously there was disinformation out there. We saw our Muslim communities across the country being subjected to hate crimes. Alone in Merseyside we would normally get in that period about 130 hate crimes. In that week we saw that shift up to about 170. …

Q57 **Joani Reid:** … in your professional opinion, do you think that being able to share more information about the suspect on 29 July in the way, in which you could not, may have prevented disorder from escalating?

Chief Constable Kennedy: I would suggest that it is difficult to say that. What I have already said is that we knew some of the disinformation that was out there about the suspect's religion and that was having an impact on our Muslim communities. I wanted to try to dispel that disinformation that was out there. It is difficult to say it would have stopped the disorder. …

Q62 **Connor Rand (Labour):** … you said a couple of times that it was a 90-minute meeting, obviously at a critical and stressful juncture. That was a 90-minute meeting just on that one point?

Chief Constable Kennedy: It was a 90-minute meeting around the press release but … the paragraph that got excluded from what I was going to say at the press conference and that was going to be released afterwards was basically around the religion.

Q63 **Connor Rand:** … we can infer from the length of that meeting that there was a robust exchange of views from both sides?

Chief Constable Kennedy: Yes. …

Q64 **Chair:** When were you aware of the suspect's religion?

Chief Constable Kennedy: I am afraid I cannot remember. …

Q65 **Chair:** Did you think about publishing it? Did you consider publishing it before it was actually published?

Chief Constable Kennedy: It was going to be published during when we were going to announce the charges. It had not been a decision for us to make prior to that, which is why we were working closely with our colleagues from CPS.

Q66 **Margaret Mullane (Labour):** Assistant Commissioner Twist, could you briefly summarise last year's disorder on Whitehall? Could you contrast that with your subsequent policing of the Tommy Robinson supporters' protest, which had that disorder missing?

Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist (Metropolitan Police): … Following events in Southport, at 7 pm on Tuesday, 30 July, we received notification in the Met that there was going to be a protest by a group called Enough is Enough, who ostensibly stated they were going to protest at Downing Street for legislation around knife crime. Similar to what Chief Constable Kennedy said, we saw some of the same patterns in terms of right-wing groups and chat that indicated that that was where it would be. …

On the night itself, the organisers' estimate was that they would get somewhere between 500 and 1,000 attendees. We think the number was at the upper range of that. …

As for the event, the group formed up, as expected, in the conditioned area … Very shortly afterwards, the group entered the carriageway. Flares were let off and a cordon was put in place. In a co-ordinated move, the majority of protesters then sought to breach the conditions that had been imposed and moved towards Parliament Square, and public order tactics were then used to prevent them doing so. We did see people throw projectiles at officers. We did see people attempt to breach the police cordons.

Over a period of time, order was restored. The group was prevented from getting into Parliament Square … 111 arrests were made, principally for breach of conditions on the night, but also for offences including violent disorder and possession of offensive weapons.

Q67 **Margaret Mullane:** With the subsequent protest, you give your recount to us on the Tommy Robinson supporters as "peaceful protest". …

Assistant Commissioner Twist: It is hard to categorise a group. We assess each event in terms of threat, harm and risk. All I can say is that in terms of observations, the Tommy Robinson protest that preceded that week on 27 July was broadly peaceful and went to plan. … there was serious disorder for a short period of time in Whitehall and we managed to contain that because we were able to generate mass quickly and stop the group moving out.

Subsequent protests we did not see. The following Saturday, 3 August, we mobilised 46 PSUs—that is just over 1,100 officers—to deal with a Palestinian Solidarity Campaign callout and as a contingency for any other protest related to this, but we did not see any. …

… we saw Telegram channels indicating that there would be cultural and nationalist protests at 15 sites, most of which was completely fictitious but, as a result, led to a reaction from left-wing and anti-right-wing groups, counter-protests. In the most extreme example, it led to a mobilisation of 10,000 people in Waltham Forest to counter-protest against a protest that was never going to happen in the first place.

From our point of view, we had to mobilise significant resources, first because the actions on Telegram and then the subsequent reposting on social media of information, which probably had no basis in the first place, led to a significant risk of counter-protest with all the challenges that might bring. …

Q68 **Margaret Mullane:** What do you think is the impact of public order policing on the Met more broadly?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: It has been enormous and I think we have to look at the span of time since October of 2023. I would say that, without any question, it is the busiest period of public order demand that the Met has ever faced. The actual chronic demand started in October of 2022 when we started seeing what I would call strategic and chronic environmental protests …

That was compounded by the chronic and very acute protests we saw following the awful events in Israel in October of 2023 and the very large, significant protest that we saw as a result of that. Some of the environmental stuff and some of the pro-Palestinian marches generated demand every day, but also extremely high demand on weekends, as well as the routine run of events in London, with seven premiership football grounds and the major events that we deal with. …

Q71 **Paul Kohler (Liberal Democrat):** I would like to explore a more general question about how much the summer riots were a manifestation of a breakdown of trust between the police and the public …

Emily Spurrell (Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and Chair of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners): … The challenge that we had is that colleagues were trying to explain the criminal justice process and the contempt of court and why every detail was not allowed to be released to the public for the reason of

trying to protect the criminal justice process to ultimately get justice for the families. …
When you are trying to go out and explain to the public how decisions are being made, why certain decisions have been taken and why certain information is not being put in the public domain to protect that process, we were coming at it from a point where they did not trust what we were saying. … we need to look at how we rebuild that trust in all the different sectors so people know that they are going to get the right service when they want it. Then when we do have to explain to them or make difficult decisions, they understand why that is happening.

Q72 **Assistant Commissioner Twist:** … We see at times malign actors and social media working in a co-ordinated way to undermine trust and to sow polarisation and discontent. We see that some of this is based from abroad. We see that some of this is based from individuals.
The thing that we are dealing with today that is different from even 10 and certainly 20 years ago is the pace at which misinformation and disinformation can spread. …

Chief Constable Ben-Julian Harrington (Public Order Leader, National Police Chiefs' Council): The disinformation element … does undermine trust and confidence. … We trade on relied, trusted engagement and relationships in peacetime, so to speak, so that when we are in a position as we saw across the country last summer, local officers are able to speak to people and say, "No, these are the facts of the matter. Trust us". …

Q73 **Paul Kohler:** That underlines the importance of community policing, does it not?

Chief Constable Harrington: Absolutely. One of the strengths of our public order model … is all the officers that we train. Whether they are dedicated to public order duties, they are always policing London or Essex or Merseyside. They are drawn from local community policing. … when they are in a neighbourhood they understand that community. They are not there just to make a mess and run away. … This is about prevention, engagement and discussion.
That leads to some of the discussions that you will have seen about whether officers are in full code protective equipment or whether in normal duty. …

Q74 **Joani Reid:** I just wanted to ask you briefly about the role of social media and your approach to dealing with that during this period. It is of course a weapon of choice for a range of actors to promote hatred and provoke violence. Could you give us an overview of how you dealt with the illegal content that you saw online and if you felt equipped and had the resources at your disposal to deal with that?
As a second part to that question, has there been any systematic analysis of the way extremists used social media to promote violence that led to the scenes that we saw on our streets?

Chief Constable Harrington: From a national perspective, first of all, the first thing is around disinformation and social media. We did work with our intelligence partners and with others to make sure we had a good assessment and to utilise and understand what information was there, whether it was telling us things that were useful. … we were told about things that simply did not happen from social media. They did not materialise and we had to react to those things.
Before you look at the use of social media and policing, there is a role now, given the way everybody lives their lives in social media, the influence from other places, that this might be a policing threat one day. It might be a health threat another day; it might be a political threat another day. There is something about national security, in my view, that says, "What is the baseline of this intelligence and this information that is there, this chatter, and then where does it peak and who is looking at that for us?" If it is a policing issue, a crime issue, then identify it to the policing sector so we can say, "What does that mean?" and delve into that. …
One of the things I want to stress is all the forces across the country were using social media analysis and content monitoring to identify and try to assess where the threat, the

risk and the harm was. … many of those events were fictitious, whether they were intentionally to dupe us or whether they were trying to stir up something that did not happen. It is very difficult to react to those individual elements around it.

The final point I would make is that we do now encourage public order commanders and public order officers and policing to use social media tactically so that where you do get a piece of information that says someone is going to go somewhere and do something or something bad is happening, how quick are our communications teams in using that to say, "No, that is not true," or what the facts of the matter are, but that is a very local issue and has to be picked up locally because it moves so quickly. You could not do that from a national perspective.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: … There is clear evidence that there are click factory sites and bots that were driving up traffic, aimed at driving polarisation and division. …

Q79 **Chair:** … what is your response to the accusations of two-tier policing?

Chief Constable Harrington: … policing and police officers every day put themselves in between two people who have different views and opinions, whether it is on a Saturday night outside a pub where someone has drunk too much, or whether it is at a football match this weekend, or indeed where you see some of the protests we have seen. The first thing to point out is a lot of this has been discussed as protests. I think all colleagues here, and certainly chiefs across the country, would say that what we saw in many of these places was simply not protests. You have heard what Serena said: seven minutes until the first violence took place. They are not protests.

Where people are coming together to express different views, we operate within the legal framework that is given, the Public Order Act. …

It is complex and sometimes very difficult, and judgments are being made on a very small piece of information where someone, perhaps on a television screen sees the whole picture, or indeed through a very small screen sees only part of the picture, and then judges the outcome or the decisions an officer or a commander has to make. …

Then of course what we saw here, and when we see violence, when somebody throws a punch, throws a bottle, tries to smash up a mosque or a community centre or a citizen, that is not protest, that is violence. It is very simple when that happens. … That is easy for them to say that is not protest; that is not two-tier policing. However, where there is nuance, where there is difference of opinion, where there is emotion, that is going to be difficult. The officers have to deal with the information that is available to them, the evidence that is there and, importantly, they have to deal with the law as it stands.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: We hear a lot about two-tier policing, and I worry that it has become a bit of a catchphrase for people who want to criticise without meaningfully engaging with the substance of the debate. … we police without fear or favour to the law as it is, not as others might wish it to be. One of the common characteristics of policing protest is you have protest and counter-protest, and almost inevitably one group will think you have gone too far and the other group will think you have not done enough. …

What is important to note is we have to assess each incident, protest or event based on the threat, harm and risk and provide a proportionate policing response. The response will differ based on the threat and harm and the law and what policy requires. …

Q80 **Connor Rand:** … Do you think the police make that explanation as much as perhaps it could be made and state that as much as it could be stated, including to local communities?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: We try, particularly in circumstances where we have communities—for example, the Jewish community in London—who have been particularly fearful as a result of a number of protest activities. We try. We do it in person. We do it in our online media presence and in our actions on the ground and how we engage. However … at times you are operating against a barrage of social media and automation within that that is trying its very best to drown it out. …

Q90 **Paul Kohler:** … How are the Government helping the police to rebuild trust and confidence in them?

Dame Diana Johnson (Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention, Home Office): … Trust and confidence in policing is one of the key parts of our Safer Streets mission. One aspect of that—an important one—is the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. It is about putting those police officers, PCSOs and specials back into our neighbourhoods, our high streets and our communities, because we all know as Members of Parliament that constituents want to see a police presence; they want to have that reassurance. It is more than that, because we know that having neighbourhood policing will often provide the intelligence that then feeds into either antisocial behaviour or, in some cases, very serious cases, a terrorism threat that might be existing in communities. …

Q91 **Paul Kohler:** … how do you square the circle of having abstractions and needing abstractions, but maintaining neighbourhood policing?

Dame Diana Johnson: … because of … the number of protests that are held in London, particularly over the last couple of years, there has been a huge need for officers to be present in central London at weekends for some of the protests.

I fully accept abstraction is a problem but the neighbourhood policing guarantee is supposed to be about saying that we recognise that it is important that neighbourhood officers are in neighbourhoods and only in exceptional circumstances would you be abstracting them out of that particular role. We are working through at the moment how best we can design the system so policing can accommodate that. …

Q92 **Shaun Davies:** The cost of that to neighbourhoods is obvious, but also there is a financial cost. Why doesn't the Government charge organisations such as football clubs, for example? … Why doesn't the Government look at ways in which to—of course, balancing the rights to protest, but where there are repeated protests from similar organisations that take a disproportionate amount of time—give police the powers to be able to either charge or otherwise manage that demand?

Dame Diana Johnson: The Home Secretary has been very clear that she is looking at that. …

Q93 **Shaun Davies:** On repeated protests, the same organisations time and time again, week after week, are putting a huge demand on police forces. Of course they have a right to protest and that has to be balanced, but there is also a proportionality to that, is there not?

Dame Diana Johnson: There is, but I think that is different. Protest is a very important part of our constitutional right to express ourselves, if we wish to, in peaceful protest. That is not something we have looked at because we recognise that people should be able to protest, but you are right that in the last few years, particularly in London, we have seen a lot of protests, on the basis of every couple of weeks with some of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign marches.

Q94 **Margaret Mullane:** … do you think that sometimes the police do not have honest conversations with the public?

Dame Diana Johnson: I am not sure I would say that the police do not have honest conversations with the public. Policing is complicated and complex.

Margaret Mullane: Explain themselves more then.

Dame Diana Johnson: I certainly think there is more that could be done in terms of communications and explanation of what is going on. … There have been examples, and I go back to the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign protests. I think initially when those protests happened, particularly the Metropolitan Police were trying to communicate and they would recognise that some of their communications on social media were not in the end very helpful. …

Q102 **Joani Reid:** I think you were here when we were discussing the role of social media, particularly in relation to Southport and the subsequent disorder. Have the Government done any assessment or any systematic analysis of the role that social media played in that disorder? Also, are there any thoughts around what can be done to deal with this going forward in a more systematic, preventative way, as well as dealing with it when crimes are committed?

Dame Diane Johnson: … HMIC [HM Inspectorate of Constabulary] is … looking at the use of intelligence, which will include obviously social media and how that was used during the disorder. DSIT [Department for Science, Innovation and Technology] lead for the Government … around relations with social media companies. I know in the disorder it was having those conversations about some of the content that was being posted. I am not sure that there has been any overarching review directly on the point that you are making.

What I was quite interested in is that after the disorder in 2011, in the report that was carried out into that, there was a very clear recommendation about the police needing to get to grips with the role of social media and how that was developing. That was in 2011, and I think we will probably say now in 2025 that there is still much more work to do around social media and how police use it. …

Q103 **Andrew Johnson (Deputy Director, Police Powers Unit, Home Office):** … at a more national level there are two other things that are important. First, clearly there needs to be some work looking at automation, because as the chiefs earlier talked about, there are thousands and thousands of posts and having police officers spending their time looking at that information is not a particularly effective use of their time when they need to be out on the streets. The other part is in relation to the National Police Co-ordination Centre and the role that it can play, both using the information that it gets from forces locally to turn into intelligence packages, to inform choices about national deployments, and then also what it can do for more national level events like the one we saw in the summer. …

To read the full transcript see
https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/15417/html/

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Government launches working group on Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia definition

… A new working group has been established to provide government with a definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia, supporting a wider stream of work to tackle the unacceptable incidents of anti-Muslim hatred.

It will advise government on how to best understand, quantify and define prejudice, discrimination, and hate crime targeted against Muslims.

With incidents of anti-Muslim hate crime at record high in England and Wales, the group's work will support wider and ongoing government-led efforts to tackle religiously motivated hate crime – delivering on the government's Plan for Change mission for safer streets.

Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, said: The rise in anti-Muslim hate crime is unacceptable and has no place in our society.

That's why we've committed to defining Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia, as a crucial steps forward in tackling it and creating a society where everyone feels safe and welcome.

The group will be chaired by Dominic Grieve KC, bringing his years of legal and government expertise to the role.

Dominic Grieve KC said: We know Islamophobia is as challenging to define as its existence is undoubted. We need to balance addressing the lived experience of those who are victims of it and the right of British Muslims to feel heard and protected as equal citizens

of our country, with the unwavering requirement to maintain freedom of thought and expression under law for all.

I welcome the government's decision to bring forward this needed work and I am hopeful that this commission will come up with principles in defining Islamophobia which are compatible with those requirements and can thus help support positive change in our country.

Alongside drawing on their own expertise, members will engage widely to ensure the definition accounts for the variety of backgrounds and experiences of Muslim communities across the United Kingdom.

The group's proposed definition will be non-statutory and will provide the government and other relevant bodies with an understanding of unacceptable treatment and prejudice against Muslim communities.

The group's proposed definition must be compatible with the unchanging right of British citizens to exercise freedom of speech and expression - which includes the right to criticise, express dislike of, or insult religions and/or the beliefs and practices of adherents.

To read the full press release see

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-working-group-on-anti-muslim-hatredislamophobia-definition

TOP

Holocaust

House of Lords Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee

Promoter's Response to the Select Committee's Special Report of Session 2024-25
https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46856/documents/241401/default/

The Select Committee report to which the above responds can be read at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldholmem/68/68.pdf

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Racial Discrimination

Chris Law (SNP) [31082] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Government plans to formally adopt a definition of anti-Palestinian racism.

> **Alex Norris:** The government condemns all forms of racism, racial discrimination and related forms of intolerance. We are committed to combatting it. We have a strong legal framework in place to deal with the perpetrators of racist and other forms of hate crime and expect the perpetrators of such offences to be brought to justice.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-12/31082

Israel: Palestinians

Chris Law (SNP) [31015] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make it his policy that Palestinian detainees in Israeli

custody with strong British connections are treated as British citizens.

Hamish Falconer: We are deeply concerned by reports of the mistreatment of detainees. The UK continues to reiterate calls for Israel to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) unfettered and immediate access to detention facilities. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and our Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates worldwide provide consular assistance to British nationals abroad. Types of British citizenship are set out on Gov.UK

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-12/31015

Information about types of British citizenship, referred to above, can be read at https://www.gov.uk/types-of-british-nationality

Refugees: Palestinians

Alex Easton (Independent) [31709] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the Palestine refugee visa scheme on (a) social cohesion, (b) public services and (c) immigration levels; and what steps she is taking to ensure that the scheme is implemented in a way that balances (i) humanitarian responsibilities and (ii) the need to maintain community stability.

Seema Malhotra: Any application for a UK visa will be assessed against the requirements of the Immigration Rules and our suitability requirements. Consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances raised and may be taken into account where certain requirements are not met.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-13/31709

House of Lords Written Answer

Gaza: Children

Lord Roberts of Llandudno (Liberal Democrat) [HL5040] To ask His Majesty's Government how many children in Gaza have been identified as "wounded child, no surviving family".

Lord Collins of Highbury: While we do not hold this specific information, the International Rescue Committee estimates that at least 17,000 children are estimated to be unaccompanied or separated from their parents in Gaza. The plight of children affected by the war in Gaza is deeply distressing. We continue to urge all parties to ensure that aid can safely and effectively reach those who need it in all parts of Gaza, including medical care and shelter equipment. Since the start of the conflict, we have announced £10 million in funding to UK-Med, enabling them to provide vital care to over 300,000 Gazans, including critical limb and life-saving surgeries, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation, in addition to £6m for UNICEF to provide lifesaving aid to vulnerable families in Gaza. We are the second largest donor to the 'Education Cannot Wait' fund which supports 5,000 children affected by the crisis.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-13/hl5040

Downing Street

PM call with President of Egypt Abdel Fattah El-Sisi: 28 February 2025

… On the situation in Gaza, the leaders agreed on their hopes for the ceasefire to become a lasting peace and for Gaza to be rebuilt. The Prime Minister reiterated his view that

Palestinians must be allowed to return to their homes in Gaza, and that a two-state solution was the only way to deliver a secure and stable future for the region. …
To read the full press release see
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-president-of-egypt-abdel-fattah-el-sisi-28-february-2025

World Bank Group, European Union, and United Nations

Gaza and West Bank Interim Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment
https://palestine.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/IRDNA%20-%20Gaza%20and%20West%20Bank%20-%20February%202025_1.pdf

United Nations

Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General – on Gaza
Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General
The Secretary-General is closely following developments in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory as the first phase of the ceasefire and hostage release deal reaches its conclusion. The past six weeks have provided a fragile but vital reprieve, offering a measure of relief to both Palestinians and Israelis. Thousands of trucks carrying life-saving assistance entered Gaza, with aid having reached nearly every person in the Strip. It is imperative that all efforts be made to prevent a return to hostilities, which would be catastrophic.
The Secretary-General urges all parties to exercise maximum restraint and find a way forward on the next phase. A permanent ceasefire and the release of all hostages are essential to preventing escalation and averting more devastating consequences for civilians. The Secretary-General continues to call for the dignified, immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. The parties must ensure humane treatment for all those held under their power. Humanitarian aid must continue to flow, without impediment, be adequately funded, and occur in an environment ensuring the safety and security of civilians and other protected persons, including humanitarian workers.
The Secretary-General also calls for an urgent de-escalation of the alarming situation in the occupied West Bank.
As Ramadan -- a time of peace and reflection -- begins, the Secretary-General calls on all sides to spare no efforts to end all violence. The United Nations stands ready to support all such endeavours.
https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2025-03-01/statement-attributable-the-spokesperson-for-the-secretary-general-%E2%80%93%C2%A0-gaza

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Secretary-General's remarks to the press
… Next Tuesday, I will be in Cairo to join the Extraordinary Summit of the League of Arab States to discuss the reconstruction of Gaza.
Since the horrific attacks of terror by Hamas in Israel on October 7, the ensuing hostilities have unleashed an unprecedented level of death and destruction in Gaza.
Gaza has become a nexus of death, displacement, hunger and disease.
Hospitals, schools and water facilities have been destroyed and reduced to rubble.
And the risk of further destruction looms over the population.
Tuesday's Summit is an opportunity for leaders across the Arab world to come together and discuss the elements required to deliver peace and stability in Gaza.

Their unified position will help guide the way forward.
I will outline key priorities.
First — the ceasefire and hostage release deal must hold. …
All hostages must be released immediately, unconditionally and in a dignified manner.
The parties must ensure humane treatment for all those held under their power.
All transfers must be carried out in a dignified way and as per the terms of the deal.
Humanitarian aid must be maintained, protected and funded, flowing without impediment to reach people in desperate need. …
Together with our partners, we've reached hundreds of thousands of people…
Providing food to nearly everyone in Gaza.
Delivering shelter kits, clothing and other essential items to tens of thousands of displaced people.
And doubling the amount of clean water available to people in Gaza.
Meanwhile, our partners have distributed medical supplies reaching some 1.8 million people, helping health facilities continue their lifesaving work. …
The ceasefire must hold. We must keep the humanitarian lifeline open.
As part of this, I will once again appeal for the urgent and full support of UNRWA's work.
UNRWA's unique role must be maintained.
Second — ending the immediate crisis is only a first step.
There must be a clear political framework that lays the groundwork for Gaza's recovery, reconstruction and lasting stability.
This framework must be based on clear principles.
This means staying true to the bedrock of international law.
It means preventing any form of ethnic cleansing.
It means there should be no long-term Israeli military presence in Gaza.
It means addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns.
It means accountability for violations of international law.
And it means Gaza remains an integral part of an independent, democratic and sovereign Palestinian state, with no reductions in its territory or forced transfer of its population.
Both Gaza and the occupied West Bank — including East Jerusalem — must be treated as one — politically, economically and administratively.
And governed by a Palestinian government that is accepted and supported by the Palestinian people.
And any transitional arrangements must be designed to achieve a unified Palestinian government within a precise and limited timeframe.
I will also call for an urgent de-escalation of the alarming situation in the West Bank.
Unilateral actions, including settlement expansion and threats of annexation, must stop.
I call for an end to attacks on civilians and their property.
Finally, we must take tangible steps — now — towards the realization of a two-State solution.
The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves, to chart their own future, and to live on their land in freedom and security.
The only path to lasting peace is one where two states — Israel and Palestine — live side by side in peace and security, in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states.
Palestinians deserve lasting stability and a just and principled peace.
And the people of Israel deserve to live in peace and security. …

To read the full transcript see
https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2025-02-28/secretary-generals-remarks-the-press-please-scroll-down-for-arabic

‘This is our land’ – Building Gaza’s future from the wreckage of war

At night he sleeps under a tarpaulin sheet on the ruins of his family home. Like others returning to northern Gaza after months of being displaced by war, Sufian Al-Majdalawi clings to whatever he can find.

Using small tools and his bare hands, he sifts through mounds of twisted debris and dirt to try and unearth belongings and important paperwork such as property deeds to prove he is the legal owner.

He dreams of one day being able to rebuild; in the short-term, he hopes that even the rubble might hold some value. …

As the international community ponders Gaza’s future and how to rebuild, Al-Majdalawi is sure of one thing: “We will not leave. That will not happen. This is our land.’’

Moving cautiously through the rubble, Yasser Ahmed says: “I am looking for my papers.” His desperate search is made even more daunting because adjacent structures have collapsed in on each other. “Maybe while I am removing the rubble, I will find a human body, an explosive device,’’ he adds, underlining the huge emotional and physical risks of dislodging debris in a war zone. …

With a fragile ceasefire in place, regional talks are underway on rebuilding Gaza after 16 months of conflict. Next Tuesday, UN Secretary-General António Guterres heads to Cairo for a reconstruction summit called by Arab leaders.

Meanwhile, UN staff are drawing on similar experiences in Mosul, Iraq, and the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Latakia, all decimated by war.

UNOPS, a UN agency that provides infrastructure, procurement and project management services around the world, is part of Gaza’s ‘Debris Management Working Group.’

The agency has conducted threat and risk assessments throughout the Territory, and has developed advanced GeoAI and remote sensing techniques, including 3D modeling technologies, to enhance explosive hazard evaluation and rubble removal strategies.

UNOPS Executive Director Jorge Moreira da Silva, following a recent trip to Gaza, says explosive hazard education had been provided to 250,000 Palestinians and some 1,000 humanitarian workers, providing “critical knowledge to stay safe and navigate explosive hazards effectively.”

UNDP, which helps countries reduce poverty, build resilience and achieve sustainable development, started removing rubble from Gaza in December 2024, weeks before a ceasefire began.

UNDP’s Sarah Poole says about 28,500 tons of rubble were initially removed, and 290 tons of it used for roadworks to enhance humanitarian operations, restoring access to sites such as a hospital, a bakery and a critical water supply plant.

Poole describes the issue of land and property ownership in Gaza as “very complex” – particularly when title deeds, inheritance records and other legal documents are lost or destroyed.

Amjad Al-Shawa, Director of the network of NGOs in the Gaza Strip, says the issue of rubble represents a “major challenge.’’

“We need a mechanism to dispose of the rubble which will take a long time, and which requires resources that are not available in the Gaza Strip,’’ he says.

“Today, this rubble also represents the possessions of the residents. Many disputes may arise between families.’’ …

The cost of the damage to physical infrastructure has been estimated at some $30 billion, according to the UN. The housing sector was the hardest hit, with losses amounting to $15.8 billion. The costs of recovery and reconstruction are estimated at over $53 billion. …

To read the full press release see

https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/03/1160661

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3922

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3741

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3909

Crime and Policing Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3938

Education (Assemblies) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3769

Exemption from Value Added Tax (Listed Places of Worship)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3847

** Holocaust Memorial Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421

Promoter's Response to the House of Lords Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee's Special Report of Session 2024-25
https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46856/documents/241401/default/

The Select Committee report to which the above responds can be read at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldholmem/68/68.pdf

Amendment Paper
https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/59312/documents/6076

Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3907

Meat (Information About Method of Killing) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3843

Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3887

Palestine Statehood (Recognition)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3771

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) (No. 2)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3796

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) (No. 3)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3831

Public Body Ethnicity Data (Inclusion of Jewish and Sikh Categories)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3901

Registration of Death (Religion) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3876

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

Amendment Paper
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0012/amend/terminally_ill_adults_rm_pbc_0303.pdf

**** Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill**
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3765

Amendment Paper
https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/59314/documents/6078

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland
https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/s6/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill (closing date not stated but "You are strongly advised to submit your written evidence as soon as possible")
https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2025/january/terminally-ill-adults-end-of-life-bill-call-for-evidence/

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