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

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Contribution of Muslims to Communities
https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-03-13/debates/F6359089-4205-4EBC-8906-22275E4FDFE7/ContributionOfMuslimsToCommunities

House of Lords Debate

Integration and Community Cohesion

col 882 **Baroness Verma (Conservative):** … School life teaches you a lot, but when you are one of two people of colour in a class, it really does teach you a lot more. It teaches you how to survive and how to be strong and resilient. It also taught me how people would stand up for me, just as I stood up for the Ugandan Asians when they arrived …

I also grew up, like many of my background, with parallel lives between what it was like at home and what it was like outside. We had to balance the culture—my parents' expectation—with what my friends expected. …

Segregation and inward-looking communities create intolerance and tensions. I want children born and brought up here to be able to engage with everyone. I do not want the mothers of those children excluded from wider debate or decision-making. …

col 883 What we say and how we say it matters, especially if you are public facing. Although I certainly do not advocate for censorship around an honest debate about the issues and concerns that impact on the lives of all citizens and the need to feel free to challenge what is negatively affecting our lives, it is also critical that we know that every action has a reaction. …

col 886 **Lord Mendelsohn (Labour):** …One of the great challenges we have is how we protect and develop our diverse and cohesive democracy: a challenge that is not unique to our country. It is regrettably clear that open and inclusive approaches to society do not automatically lead to these outcomes. Indeed, we must always work at it to protect our

democracy and build in resilience. The challenges we face cover many areas: how we build a society of common values, rights and responsibilities, and how we draw in different communities and underpin their economic and social needs.

Secondly, we must also ensure the integration of communities and how they develop, understand and achieve their place in society. Thirdly, we must bear down on extremism, especially on those whose actions tear the fabric of a cohesive society and whose perceptions of the exercise of their rights not just undermines the well-being of another community but stretches the culture of democracy. …

col 887 **Lord Dholakia (Liberal Democrat):** … There is now a search for the shared values that might be called English or British. Many have argued that it is important to articulate a shared sense of national identity in contemporary conditions of flux and change. If so, how can we reconcile this with diversity, openness and pluralism of belief and practice?

Fixed notions of shared identity, even if they could be agreed upon, are less necessary than promoting individual identity, pluralism and genuine multiculturalism. …

col 888 There is a confusion not only about identity but about what it is we are trying to talk about when we talk about race, religion, identity and ill-defined multiculturalism all mixed in the pot. For example, some politicians have claimed that the wearing of the veil by some Muslim women constitutes a visible statement of separation or difference. Of course it is right that there is a sensible debate about such issues. We should question what happens when an individual or group identity impinges on other people's lives or liberties. But do we really believe that wearing of the veil will have a bearing in the process of community cohesion or the advancement of an integrated society?

Britain has been at the forefront of legislative and other machinery to establish equality of opportunity for all citizens, and strong new legislation on race, disability, gender, age, faith and sexual orientation has put new emphasis on protecting and promoting good relations between different groups. However, confusion still remains over whether this has helped to strengthen society towards a common identity.

To unpick the confusion, we need to analyse the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and examine the changing patterns of all our communities. For example, we talk about our ethnic minorities, but when have we ever taken into account that the largest ethnic group in Britain is our mixed-race community? We also need to consider post-war migration and the process of globalisation, which crosses the geographical boundaries of all nations. …

col 889 **Baroness Prashar (Crossbench):** … Diverse communities are enriching, and an engine for innovation and progress, but diversity is a double-edged sword. If we do not cohere as diverse communities, society becomes fragile. … Larger flows of people, misinformation, international conflicts, and the import of issues from the countries of origin of some of the communities have exacerbated the tensions. Consequently, we have witnessed loss of pride of place in communities, anti-social behaviour and rioting. Lack of appropriate policy responses to manage diversity over the past six-plus decades have also contributed to the balkanisation of communities.

In the name of multiculturalism, policies have been advanced which have widened differences and hindered integration. … Given the complex nature of diversity today, multifaceted interactions are needed to build trust, break barriers and bind communities and society together. This requires a sense of inclusion, trust in the state and a broad framework of shared values that hold society together but enable different perspectives to be explored.

Integration is a foundational step towards community and social cohesion, but it is not enough. Many worthy efforts have been made to enhance social connections, build trust, engender understanding and create meaningful dialogue to break down barriers. But, as I said, these are necessary but not enough. What we need are national and local strategies for integration and community cohesion. …

col 890 **The Lord Bishop of Lichfield:** … A cohesive community is not one in which every person is the same, but in which they each share a sense of belonging despite their differences. They may have different cultures, beliefs or religions, but each person feels respected and valued. …

It is relationships that are at the heart of bridging the social and cultural gaps that can divide our communities. While we can and must speak of policy at a national level, integration work is best done by those on a local level, who can listen to and understand the needs of their communities. Local authorities, alongside the voluntary community and faith sector, are critical to integration and to bringing people together to build trust and understanding through creating space for cross-cultural interaction, interfaith dialogue and friendships across difference. …

col 891 Education is also a vital part of successful integration and building community cohesion. In particular, religious education in schools plays an important role in enabling understanding of different cultures, religions and world views, equipping pupils from an early age with the knowledge and tools to understand and thrive in a multicultural society. However, RE is too often neglected as a subject, with pupils frequently being taught by teachers with no qualifications in the subject. …

col 894 **Lord McNicol of West Kilbride (Labour):** … Community cohesion … is not merely a social nicety. It is one of the cornerstones of our society, fostering a sense of belonging, mutual respect and shared values among often diverse communities. Across the globe we see isolationism, protectionism and narrow self-interest leaping up the political agenda. It is through integration that we can bridge many of the gaps between different groups, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive and contribute to the rich tapestry of British life. …

col 896 **Baroness Bottomley of Nettlestone (Conservative):** … I want to move on to universities … Religion can be the elephant in the room: people are uncomfortable talking about it. If you talk to people in universities at the moment, they are really alarmed by what has happened, in terms of it simply becoming a taboo subject, a no-go area. …

col 897 **Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat):** … To qualify to speak in this debate, I think I ought to stress that my mother came from Poland as a teenager, between the wars. She married my father, who also came from far away—Newcastle—while my maternal grandmother and other family died in the Holocaust. …

We are fortunate in the UK in having numerous communal organisations, including the Community Security Trust, the Board of Deputies and the Jewish Leadership Council. There are many others. Sadly, external events can have a significant effect. Since Hamas killed and took hostages in Israel on 7 October 2023—as long ago as that—there has been a significant division in the UK. These divisions impact on Jewish life, resulting in tensions in the workplace, in educational institutions, on our streets and in communal spaces. There has, sadly, been a rise in anti-Semitism.

col 898 Many in the UK Jewish community feel more vulnerable than before and this is surely unacceptable. There are no easy answers. Interfaith initiatives need to be supported. Education needs to be improved on what is seen as anti-Semitism and how hurtful it is in the workplace, on the streets and in education. We have to face up to the fact that news travels faster than before, no more so than if that news is false or distorted. A lie once posted online soon becomes viral. Corrections, if made, are often ignored by those willing to believe those falsehoods.

It is often hard to explain to others that Israel plays an important part in the identity of the UK Jewish community due to religious, cultural, family and economic ties. It is not anti-Semitic to criticise Israel—after all, Jews and Israelis do it all the time—but it is an uncomfortable feeling to see the only Jewish state, comprising a population of only nine million, including non-Jews, singled out or held to higher standards than other nations. This can be seen in cases such as when a UK local authority supports the boycott and

divestments campaign. We rarely hear of the 8 million Jews who fled Arab lands, mainly to settle in Israel. In the main that was because Israel, as we are trying to suggest today, integrates them into the general populace. There needs to be a stronger enforcement against extremism in the charity sector, which should be stamped on by the Charity Commission.

Of course, these falsehoods do not apply only to the UK Jewish community. In reflecting on the importance of community cohesion between Jewish and Muslim communities, I am heartened by initiatives such as Mitzvah Day, the UK's largest day of social action. It brings together over 50,000 individuals from incredibly diverse backgrounds to engage in charitable activities that strengthen our social fabric. Notably, in 2024, Mitzvah Day's theme was "Stronger Together", emphasising unity in challenging times. Faith leaders from various traditions collaborated on projects supporting vulnerable families, exemplifying the power of collective action in fostering interfaith harmony. …

The aim is to build bridges between communities. … We must all support initiatives aiming to deal with anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim hate, anti-Hindu hate—hate of all sorts. …

col 899 **Baroness Hazarika (Labour):** … I think of my father, who came to this country in the late 1960s. He began his working life in Clatterbridge Hospital on the Wirral and was desperately homesick and lonely. The sister on his ward, a formidable woman called Audrey, noticed this lost soul and, in her bossy way, demanded that he came round to her house for Sunday lunch. … My dad had his very first pint under the tutelage of her husband … In return, my dad cooked them delicious Indian food and they learned about his life. … That is the essence of integration. It should be based on human qualities of kindness, curiosity and friendship.

That is the fuzzy, feel-good bit out of the way—now for the other side. I got an email when I first came into this place. … I paraphrase, but this is the gist of that email: "Don't kid yourself Hazarika. For the millions of us who can trace our heritage on these islands back many centuries—unlike you—we loathe and detest you and your kind more than life itself, because of how you have completely destroyed our country. You can fill the streets with uninvited and unwanted migrants, ethnics and left-wing Trots, but plenty of us are prepared to die to save our nation and its way of life, but we are not going to die in vain. Don't ever, ever forget that. Long live Enoch Powell". …

So it is not all good. There are extremists in different communities, including my own, who spread hate and feast off division. International conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, are affecting these shores, and, as we have heard, we are seeing a shocking rise in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Let us be honest: our politics have not helped either. We on the left are still deeply ashamed that anti-Semitism bloomed in the Labour Party under the last leadership. …

col 900 **Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Conservative):** … The vital nature of what my noble friend has introduced today can be contained in one statistic: last year in this country, 31% of all children born were born to mothers who were not born in this country. That is the scale of social change that is going on …

About five years ago, I chaired a cross-party Select Committee of your Lordships' House on citizenship and civic engagement. …

First, as a committee, we felt there was a need to distinguish between what you might call integration and assimilation; in other words, if you come to this country, what do you have to give up to be a full member of our society—which you might call your civic identity? What can you keep, and by keeping, enrich our society as a whole—which you might call your sociocultural identity? This country does not exist in a moral vacuum. There are essential values that have to be respected. However uncomfortable it may be, there are red lines that have to be enforced. …

col 901 Secondly, tackling these very difficult issues will not happen by osmosis. This needs to be taught and taught well. That is why citizenship education is so vital. …

col 902 **Lord Katz (Labour):** … this debate … is particularly timely as, this evening, observant Jews begin observing the very happy holiday of Purim, which commemorates a perfect story for this debate on community cohesion and integration. It sees a young Jewish woman, Esther, integrating into the Persian court by virtue of becoming queen, and, in doing so, standing up for her own community against the forces of hatred that seek to rip apart an otherwise cohesive community. …

Just last month, the Community Security Trust said that 2024 was the second-worst year for anti-Semitism that it had seen, with more than half as many incidents as the next highest year, which was only 2021.

Meanwhile, Tell MAMA, which does equivalent work for the Muslim community … said that 2024 was the worst year in its history for recorded anti-Muslim hate cases …

The noble Baroness, Lady Bottomley, touched on intolerance on campus, and we have seen the hatred against Jews on regular protests in central London and elsewhere since 7 October 2023. This is undeniable, indefensible and a direct attack on community cohesion. Of course, many who march are there solely, and rightly, to show solidarity with the Palestinian cause. However, they are joined by those who simply cannot or will not do this without invoking naked anti-Jewish racism. The organisers of these demonstrations allow this to continue in seemingly blissful ignorance, with little or no effort made to warn those attending or stewarding those marches that, for instance, placards bearing swastikas intertwined with the Star of David or which equate Zionism with Nazism are simply unacceptable. Protestors may believe, wrongly, that chanting “From the river to the sea” is not anti-Semitic, but it should simply be enough to know that Jews find it at the very least objectionable and hurtful to persuade them to desist. Community cohesion is damaged when one of the country’s smallest minority groups, the Jewish community, is targeted in this way. The right to free speech should surely be balanced by a care for social cohesion. It should not be solely up to the police to deter racist behaviour on demonstrations, but up to those organising them too. …

col 903 I was struck by polling by the excellent HOPE not hate in their *Fear & HOPE 2024* report, which found that in 2011, only 12% of British people polled had never had any contact with Jews, but that last year this figure had risen to nearly a third. For Muslims the equivalent figure had grown from just 8% in 2011 to 18% in 2024. The same trend is true for Hindus and Sikhs. …

I worry that trends in education have exacerbated the problem. This is not an attack on faith schools. My daughters attend an excellent Jewish comprehensive, having attended a very mixed community primary, but the increasing proportion of Jewish kids going to Jewish schools not only risks isolating them; it means that kids from other backgrounds do not get to meet a Jewish person and in so doing perhaps dispel some of the awful myths and tropes they may pick up on the internet. This cannot be healthy for our society; nor is it in any of our religious minority groups’ interest. …

This goes to the nub of the problem. When hate rises, it is only natural for communities to hide away, creating a vicious circle which harms community cohesion. My own community has a proud history of integrating into British life in all its facets, including in this House. At the risk of sounding trite, did we flee ghettos 80 years ago merely to have to recreate them here? …

col 906 **Lord Goodman of Wycombe (Conservative):** … the Britain of the future will be less white, older and less Christian. Other faiths will grow, especially Islam, which by 2050 is likely to be followed by some 15% of the population. Therefore, when we talk of integration, we must not assume that others, who are neither white nor culturally Christian, must somehow integrate into the rest of the country that is, because the country is changing. …

col 907 In a nutshell, we have the balance wrong. There must be some policing of private space in relation to, for example, support for terror, child abuse or incitement to violence. Integration is not enhanced, and nor are the police well served, by the thinking behind or

the recording of non-crime hate incidents, as too often happens. Similarly, there must be free expression in public space in relation to, for example, events in the Middle East. However, liberty is not licence, and there can be no room in the public square for support for terrorist organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, or for anti-Semitism or anti-Muslim hatred. …

col 911 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Khan of Burnley):** … Integration is the foundation on which social cohesion is built. Effective integration ensures equitable access to resources, opportunities and support, while social cohesion fosters trust, shared values and collaboration among different groups. Together, they strengthen social stability, reduce inequalities and promote a sense of belonging, which is essential for a thriving and harmonious society.

Integration is not about assimilation: we do not want individuals to feel that they have to give up their identity and heritage. Instead, it is about ensuring that every individual can succeed and feel represented, accepted and at home in the community they live in, so long as they respect the UK's fundamental values …

Yet integration in the UK can also come with challenges. Adjusting to a new language, finding stable employment and navigating public services is not always easy. Cultural differences and social isolation can also take time to overcome. When people do not feel connected to their communities, we see hatred and divisions form. …

col 913 The Government support recruitment to teacher training in religious education by offering a bursary of £10,000, but I take the point made by the right reverend Prelate and other noble Lords about making sure that PSHE, citizenship classes or religious education classes are not taught by people who do not have the skills and expertise. …

col 914 The noble Lord, Lord Palmer, and my noble friend Lord Katz mentioned the high levels of anti-Semitism and religious hate crime. Of course, this is unacceptable and the Government will ensure that this is a priority. We continue to work closely with the noble Lord, Lord Mann, our anti-Semitism adviser, and on anti-Muslim hatred we have just announced a working group chaired by the former Attorney-General, Dominic Grieve. According to the Home Office, 71% of all religious hate crime is aimed at Jews and Muslims. We should ensure that we work across all religions to tackle this scourge in our country and we will continue to focus on this issue. …

col 916 It is also important to say that we will support our communities holistically. We launched a £1.5 billion plan for neighbourhoods, which will provide funding into the next decade. Cohesion measures will form a key part of our offering, bringing people together so they can feel proud of their area, and restoring a collective sense of belonging. …

To read the full transcript see
https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-03-13/debates/415F363A-1D8B-4909-9582-D2FB242B2AD2/IntegrationAndCommunityCohesion

Fear and Hope 2024, referred to above by Lord Katz, can be read at
https://hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FINAL-FEAR-AND-HOPE-291024.pdf

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

Bob Blackman (Conservative) … Today is Purim, when Jewish people throughout the world celebrate their deliverance from the first attempt of genocide of Jewish people at the hands of the then Persian empire. Tomorrow is Holi, when Hindus throughout the world will celebrate the deliverance of Vishnu from Holika, the evil witch who was consumed by fire. …

Will the Leader of the House join me in wishing Jewish people everywhere chag Purim

sameach and all Hindus happy Holi?

Lucy Powell: … May I join [Bob Blackman] … in wishing those celebrating Purim and Holi the best of times this week? …

https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-03-13/debates/D38967E3-5513-442A-B583-FF6DC6633503/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-53FE3C67-56CA-4F33-A9A1-0064D13599A8

House of Commons Written Answers

The following two questions both received the same answer

Palestine Action

Luke Akehurst (Labour) [36351] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if her Department will take steps to help stop (a) Palestine Action's direct action training days and (b) the spread of violent direct action training materials.

Palestine Action: Demonstrations

Luke Akehurst (Labour) [36352] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will review the adequacy of legislation related to the policing of the operations of (a) Palestine Action and (b) other direct action groups.

Diana Johnson: Whilst the right to protest is a fundamental part of our democracy, this right does not extend to activities that promote violence or criminal damage.

The decision to investigate potential criminal activity is a matter for the police, who are operationally independent of government. Home Office Ministers cannot interfere in operational decisions of this nature, as to do so could undermine their independence.

However, the Government will always support the police in using their powers as robustly as possible to prevent crime and maintain public order and safety where appropriate.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36351
and
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36352

The following three questions all received the same answer

Islamophobia

Kevin Hollinrake (Conservative) [36101] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the written statement of 3 March 2025, HCWS487, on Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, what the criteria was used to select (a) the chair and (b) the working group members.

Kevin Hollinrake (Conservative) [36102] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the written statement of 3 March 2025, HCWS487, on Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, when the (a) terms of reference and (b) membership will be deposited.

Kevin Hollinrake (Conservative) [36103] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the written statement of 3 March 2025, HCWS487, on Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group, what interests the chair of the working group on delivering a definition of Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia has declared; and whether he will be remunerated.

Alex Norris: The Anti-Muslim Hate/Islamophobia Definition Working Group Chair and Members are technical experts, and have been selected for their ability to deliver against the group's objectives. All members must follow The Seven Principles of Public Life and the Government retains the right to end the relationship if any member does not abide by the principles. All appointments are subject to assessment of any potential or actual conflicts of interest, which must be fully

disclosed to the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government. Group members will not be remunerated but will be able to claim expenses for travel and/or costs incurred whilst carrying out their role. Further detail of the group's membership and Terms of Reference will be published after the public appointment process has concluded.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36101
and
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36102
and
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36103

The written statement referred to above can be read at
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2025-03-03/hcws487

The Seven Principles of Public Life, referred to above, can be read at
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

House of Lords Oral Answers

Tell MAMA: Funding

Baroness Falkner of Margravine (Crossbench): To ask His Majesty's Government why they have ended funding for the charity Tell MAMA.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Khan of Burnley): My Lords, funding for Tell MAMA has not ended. We have made £1 million available for Tell MAMA this year, subject to it signing the grant funding agreement. I had a constructive meeting with Tell MAMA yesterday. It would be remiss of me to disclose the details of that conversation, but I am hopeful of a swift resolution. Combating hate towards Muslims is a priority for this Government. We will soon open a call for grant applications to provide a comprehensive service to monitor anti-Muslim hatred and support victims. We encourage Tell MAMA to apply.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine: My Lords, I have the greatest respect for the Minister, but does he agree that, when Ministers have meetings with parliamentarians to discuss government policy, this should be done in good faith and with candour? Last week he had a meeting with parliamentarians to discuss his Government's advisory group on Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hatred. I asked him a direct question about Tell MAMA and its lack of inclusion in the Government's advisory group. He was evasive at best, so I am delighted that he has confirmed to the House today that he has not ended funding for this moderate group that does vital work in the community. Will he also confirm that the funding will be forthcoming immediately, as Tell MAMA had the grant confirmation letter in September and is running out of money? Will he also reassure the House that moderate Muslim groups are as worthy of the government support as the others that they have hand-picked for their advisory group?

Lord Khan of Burnley: … all organisations must sign a standard government agreement before receiving government funds. Following extensive negotiations, we reached agreement with Faith Matters on its grant funding agreement, but the organisation has yet to sign it. As soon as it is signed and returned, we will instruct payment. Following yesterday's meeting, I am confident this will be resolved soon.

Lord Kamall (Conservative): … I understand that there are two concerns about this organisation. First, there is a lack of community engagement: they seem to be self-appointed spokespeople. Secondly, there were concerns about financial irregularities. …

Lord Khan of Burnley: … it would be remiss of me to comment on negotiations

we are having with Tell MAMA. …

Lord Empey (UUP): My Lords, would the Minister be prepared to let us know, and publish and put a letter in the Library about, the terms, conditions and criteria that are applied not only to this group but to similar organisations? The Community Security Trust does similar work for the Jewish community. It might be helpful to have some clarity on that, so there is no risk of other organisations finding themselves in the same situation.

Lord Khan of Burnley: My Lords, because this is a competitive bidding and an open-ground process, that will be published as we open that process for people to apply for government services. Everyone is welcome to apply. The service is going to continue and everyone is invited to apply, including Tell MAMA.

Lord Harris of Haringey (Labour): … Could [the Minister] confirm … that, first of all, there is a commitment from the Government that they want to see an independent third-party reporting system for anti-Muslim hate, in which members of the public can feel confident? Secondly, could he confirm that the Government are seeking to ensure—as any sensible Government would—that they are getting the best value for money from a bidding process that ensures that the services are effective and highly respected?

Lord Khan of Burnley: My Lords, my noble friend makes an excellent point. We remain steadfast in our dedication to delivering comprehensive monitoring of anti-Muslim hatred and providing support for victims of it. We are committed to providing a comprehensive service to monitor anti-Muslim hatred and provide support. We will soon be opening a call for grant applications for future work in this area. Further details will be provided in due course. Moving away from directly awarded grants to an open, competitive grant process will ensure greater transparency and value for money in our grant partnerships.

Baroness Scott of Bybrook (Conservative): … What concerns me about the Government's new way of working with third-party funding is that there could be a period of time when these services are not being provided, as you move from one provider to another. Tell MAMA measures and monitors anti-Muslim hate crime very well. I would want to know that the Government are still doing that, if there is a period of time with nobody there. More importantly, I would want to know that the support that Tell MAMA gives to the Muslim community and victims of hate crime is still there.

Lord Khan of Burnley: My Lords, I can reassure the noble Baroness and the House that the service of monitoring and reporting of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred will continue. …

The world has changed since 7 October and the Southport disturbances. It is only right for us to have the opportunity to go out to the market and find the best value for money. But I can confirm that there will be a continuous service of reporting and monitoring of anti-Muslim hatred.

The Lord Bishop of Lichfield: My Lords, I welcome the Government's launch of a new working group to provide a definition of Islamophobia. I ask the Minister: whom does this group plan to consult, both within and beyond the Islamic community, to inform that definition and ensure that it accounts for the lived experience of the Muslim community?

Lord Khan of Burnley: … It is an independent group chaired by the former Attorney-General, Dominic Grieve KC. It is for him to decide, but it is pretty clear that any definition of anti-Muslim hatred or Islamophobia should have multiple perspectives from multiple communities and absolutely uphold our fundamental right of freedom of speech.

Baroness Gohir (Crossbench): … I am really glad that the Tell MAMA funding has been reviewed. I had been raising red flags and concerns about the Tell MAMA project for one year, with a 10-page letter and 30 questions … Can the Government provide assurances that whoever is selected has community buy-in? Hopefully, it will be several organisations, because the Muslim community is very diverse and large.

Lord Khan of Burnley: … We appreciate the work Tell MAMA has done. It is a

providing a very important service and it is welcome apply to the open grant process.

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Conservative): My Lords, the press reports that the police have expressed alarm about this cut. …

Lord Khan of Burnley: … the question of police views is a very important point. Any monitoring or reporting of hate crimes for any religion should always have a good relationship with police forces across the country, wherever that occurs. To add to the point that the noble Baroness made, it is important that the community feels confident during the whole process to report any instances of hate crimes. We want to protect everyone, whichever religion they are from. Everyone should be safe and made to feel safe.

To read the full transcript see
https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-03-13/debates/71358A34-B757-4ACF-8BDF-759408F20A41/TellMAMAFunding

Scottish Parliament Motion

Karen Adam (SNP) [S6M-16812] **Banff to Bethlehem Project** – That the Parliament applauds all at Banff Academy for the inspiring project, Banff to Bethlehem, which sees S2 pupils working on a project-based learning initiative on art and sustainability in partnership with a Palestinian street artist, Taqi Spateen, and the Bethlehem Cultural Festival; welcomes the school's plans to stage an exhibition showcasing the project, spanning Banff to Bethlehem, as a powerful platform for raising awareness, celebrating creativity and sharing stories of resilience; considers this a stellar example of collaboration, understanding and friendship-building, as well as an outstanding model of best practice for other schools to follow, and wishes all involved every success with the exhibition and the wider project.
https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-16812

TOP

Israel

See also the Lords debate "Integration and Community cohesion", Commons written answers 36351 "Palestine Action" and 36352 "Palestine Action: Demonstrations", and Scottish Parliament Motion S6M-16812 "Banff to Bethlehem Project" that are included in the Home Affairs section above.

House of Lords Debate

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill: Second Reading

col 945 **Baroness Northover (Liberal Democrat):** … In the light of recent proposals by President Trump and huge global instability, I think that this Bill has become even more vital. The idea that Gaza should be cleared out and its population moved to other countries to become an American riviera is deeply shocking. My Bill would require the Government to recognise Palestine as a sovereign and independent state on pre-1967 lines, just as almost 150 of the 193 UN countries have done. …

Some say that it is too late: the Swiss cheese effect of Israeli settlements, roads, walls and checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territories means that a contiguous Palestinian state is no longer viable. The actions and words of the current Israeli Government seem

intent on making it even less likely. Several Israeli Ministers have been clear that they will never accept such an outcome.

Nevertheless, most countries, including the UK, remain committed to a two-state solution. …

col 946 Some say that recognition now would be seen as a reward for the Hamas terrorists who carried out the atrocities of 7 October. Absolutely not: this would be the long-overdue recognition of a state for the Palestinian people, not for a particular group. …

They need the hope of a political process. As three Israeli former ambassadors—who, by bravely speaking out, face much opposition—have said, "recognition would not benefit the Palestinians alone. At this point in time, there can be no greater contribution to peace and security for us Israelis as well".

Britain, of course, has a special responsibility. The 1917 Balfour Declaration was made here. Balfour spoke of a national homeland for Jewish people in Palestine, but he also spoke about safeguarding the "civil and religious rights of … non-Jewish communities". …

The former ambassadors state: "Reluctance by key western states to recognise Palestine has fed Israel's misguided belief that the bestowal of Palestinian independence is its prerogative, to be conferred when the Palestinians meet its requirements".

But it cannot be the case that an established state should be able to veto the recognition of a neighbour in its own territories. Neither can this be subject to negotiation and conditions. …

In 2011, William Hague, the then Foreign Secretary—and now the noble Lord, Lord Hague—stated: "The United Kingdom judges that the Palestinian Authority largely fulfils criteria for UN membership, including statehood".—[*Official Report*, Commons, 9/11/11; col. 290.]

Palestine was granted observer status at the UN General Assembly in 2012.

In 2014, the Commons voted for recognition, with the Minister's support. …

col 947 It is something with which the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, as Foreign Secretary, appeared to agree in early 2024, until reduced back to the traditional government line. …

The 2024 Labour Party manifesto stated: "Palestinian statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. It is not in the gift of any neighbour and is also essential to the long-term security of Israel".

So, to my very straightforward Bill. Clause 1 requires the recognition of Palestine "as a sovereign and independent state on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination in the State of Palestine". …

Clause 1(2) specifies that "pre-1967 borders" "has the same meaning as in resolution 76/10 (2021) of the UN General Assembly" and other such resolutions. Clause 2 recognises the mission of Palestine in London as "a full diplomatic mission". Clause 3 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament within two months of the passage of the Act on steps taken to implement it. …

col 948 **Lord Dubs (Labour):** … The United Kingdom has a historic responsibility going back to the time of the mandate. We have to act upon that. …

The Foreign Secretary, David Lammy, said: "We are committed to Palestinian recognition. We hope to work with partners to achieve that, when the circumstances are right".—[*Official Report*, Commons, 19/7/24; col. 305.]

It is that phrase, "when the circumstances are right", that has delayed progress up to now. … the circumstances are right at the present time. …

The tragedy of 7 October in Israel and the thousands of deaths in Gaza surely demand a new way forward for all the people in the region. I firmly believe that there can be no security for the people of Israel until the Palestinians also have their own state. …

Earlier this month, there was an emergency meeting of the Arab League in Cairo dealing with the post-war reconstruction of Gaza. The President of Egypt said that the establishment of a Palestinian state is the only path to "genuine peace". It is notable that both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas have welcomed these proposals. …

col 949 **Lord Frost (Conservative):** … I think we have to look at the situation on the ground. Israel has been fighting for 18 months now. It is much the longest war it is ever been involved in. It involves not just Gaza, but Lebanon, Syria and even Yemen and Iran. It is imposed huge strains on Israeli society, and there is no end in sight to it. So it is not surprising that Israelis are sceptical about the land for peace concept, and it has failed as a concept, most obviously in Gaza. Indeed, only about a quarter of Israelis now support a two-state solution. Equally importantly, as a PSR poll last autumn showed, only 39% of Palestinians support a two-state solution. …

That is the context in which we must consider this proposal to require HMG to recognise Palestine as "a sovereign and independent state on the basis of the pre-1967 borders".

The only problem is that no such state exists on the ground. … Palestinians have very limited control of the territory, for good security reasons. There is no real ability to engage in interaction with other states. They have institutions that are riddled with anti-Semitism and corruption and simply cannot govern. There simply is nothing approximating to a state, which is important because that is the basis for UK recognition of states. …

col 950 **Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench):** … For many years as a loyal British diplomat, I defended the idea that the recognition of Palestinian statehood could come only at the end of a process that settled by negotiation the vexed issues of territory, security, refugees, governance and the status of Jerusalem. So long as Yitzhak Rabin lived, that was a realistic prospect, but he was assassinated for supporting a two-state solution. Since then, the idea of holding back the recognition of Palestinian statehood has become a mirage abandoned by an increasing number of countries around the world …

col 951 **The Lord Bishop of Gloucester:** … It is poignant that today is the Jewish festival of Purim, wonderfully marking the saving of the Jewish people from annihilation. It is a stark reminder that all people are equal and, I would add, created in the image of God.

We must go on naming the abhorrent attack on Israel by Hamas. We remember all those who grieve and live with trauma, and of course those who continue to be held hostage and must be released. At the same time, we must not become dull to the horrors of the war in Gaza. All people are equal.

For Palestinians in the West Bank, their present is about surviving the intensification of military activity, increased house demolition, road blockages and massive inflation and poverty levels, along with the collapse of basic services. Even in conversation with Christians, who would usually speak of hope, there was a palpable sense of a struggle to contemplate what an earthly good future might look like, not least amid a sense of being abandoned by international leaders and indeed the majority of the worldwide Church. … Recognition of Palestinian statehood should not be contingent on non-existent negotiations. It is vital to acknowledge the equal rights of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, demonstrating parity of esteem for both. …

col 952 **Lord Katz (Labour):** … Given the facts on the ground and the legacy of Hamas's terrorist pogrom on 7 October, together with everything that has followed, I fear it is simply wishful thinking to say that immediate recognition of a Palestinian state … would advance the peace process. It might feel like the right thing to do, or indeed a wise diplomatic signal to send, and it might win praise here in the UK, but would it advance peace in the region? Experience of unilateral action suggests not. …

Recognition is a card that you can play only once. Timing is everything. As the Oslo accords state, any dispute must be resolved through direct negotiations. Only through such engagement and mutual agreement, which Britain can and must support, will we deliver lasting peace. However … this requires fundamental change on both sides. First, it seems otiose … to point out that Hamas simply can never be a partner for peace. But there are also progressive forces in mainstream Israeli politics that are thinking productively as to how best to move forward towards peace from this fragile ceasefire. Yair Golan MK, who is leader of the Democrats—Labor's sister political party, formed out of

Avodah and Meretz—a retired major-general in the IDF and an absolute hero of 7 October … outlines a three-stage progress process towards peace. Time prevents me going into detail, as it prevents me talking about Yair Lapid's credible alternative, called the Egyptian solution. … They hold out the prospect of statehood at the right time—not at the end, but not now. …

col 953 **Baroness Morris of Bolton (Conservative):** … the history of the United Kingdom and the Palestinian territories is deeply entwined. Through that shared history, we have a special responsibility to the Palestinian people, and we should discharge that responsibility, which is long overdue, by the recognition of Palestine as a sovereign state alongside the sovereign State of Israel. … Recognition should be the first step in the process, not the last. …

The Palestinians are not asking for anything extraordinary. … They are simply asking to be able to enjoy the freedoms and life experience that we all cherish and often take for granted. …

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat): … More than a century has passed since the [Balfour] declaration, during which time more and more land has been taken forcibly from the Palestinian people and atrocious violations of civil and human rights have been heaped upon them. They are unquantifiable in scale, so large are the numbers, and immeasurable in their impacts on the physical and mental health and well-being of Palestinian men, women and children. The occupying Israeli forces have used collective punishment to subjugate the civilian population. Collective punishment is a war crime the under the Geneva convention.

Witness the situation in Gaza today, where all humanitarian aid remains blocked by Israel and electricity has been cut off. The arbitrary detention of men, women and children has been commonplace—illegal under national law. There has been the forced displacement of people—illegal under international law.

Some noble Lords who contribute to today's debate may not agree that Israel is guilty of heinous human rights abuses. Israel can put those allegations to bed immediately by allowing independent journalists and observers into Gaza and ceasing its violations of press freedoms in the West Bank. It is a fact that independent human rights investigators, fact-finding missions and the International Criminal Court still do not have access to Gaza.

Statehood for Palestine is long overdue. Britain has a special responsibility to put right its actions of the last century and undo the damage of the Balfour Declaration. …

col 955 **Lord Soames of Fletching (Conservative):** … Today, the settler population of the illegally occupied West Bank—that includes east Jerusalem—numbers around 750,000 people. Back in 1993 when the Oslo accords were signed, when we dreamed of a two-state solution, the number of settlers was 250,000. … The intention of the Israeli Finance Minister, himself a settler, is to increase those numbers to over a million. All these settlers have the full rights of Israeli citizenship. They live under Israeli civil law, unlike their Palestinian neighbours, who live under Israeli military law—two peoples in the same territory but under a discriminatory legal system. …

In all, there are now nearly 300 illegal settlements in the West Bank—every one illegal, every one an obstacle to peace. During what was meant to be a ceasefire, Israel has mounted a massive military operation in the northern West Bank, starting two days after signing the ceasefire deal, using tanks in cities for the first time in 20 years and forcibly displacing 40,000 Palestinians. This is not the only example of forced displacement outside of Gaza, where 90% of the population has been forcibly displaced over the last 18 months. Israeli settler violence, aided and abetted by the Israeli army, has targeted Palestinian communities in area C, and now increasingly in area B, of the West Bank. This is forced displacement, where violence has been deployed to force these communities into the cities, so that settlers can steal even more land in occupied territory.

Israeli settlers know that they will not be arrested, let alone imprisoned. The culture of

impunity that they enjoy, sadly, is akin to the impunity that Israel enjoys internationally. … The legal position of the occupation is now clear, as the world's highest court, the International Court of Justice, made clear last July. …

col 956 **Baroness Elliott of Whitburn Bay (Labour):** … For years Palestinians have been looking aghast at British policy and its hesitancy to recognise an independent state of Palestine. …

I want to challenge some of the arguments made against recognition. We do not have to recognise the state of Palestine with borders. There are plenty of examples where we have recognised states with territorial disputes, and rightly so—not least Israel, a state that has not declared its borders and in fact keeps expanding, but it is absolutely right that we recognise it.

We do not need to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and we will not have to recognise Jerusalem as Palestine's capital. All of this should be decided in negotiations towards peace. But recognising a state of Palestine, as we recognised the State of Israel, should not be up for negotiation. It is in the gift of the British Government …

Some point out that the Palestinian Authority is weak, and many think that it is corrupt, but recognition is not an endorsement of any Government …

Some argue that Israel will react by freezing out contacts with Britain, as it did with Sweden and Ireland, but … We should stand up to bullies on a matter of principle. …

col 957 The Arab plan is for a two-state solution, to which the UK subscribes. The Israeli plan is for a one-state solution in which there is no Palestinian right of self-determination, no Palestinian state and no peace. The British Government need to recognise the state of Palestine, support the Arab plan in Cairo and take a leadership role in moving this situation forward. …

Baroness Warsi (Non-affiliated): … Tragically, as we have failed to recognise Palestine, methodically and, I would argue, deliberately, the probability of Palestine existing as a state has been diminished. Each time we have failed, more Palestinian land has been occupied, more Palestinians have been displaced, more homes have been demolished and another generation of Palestinians have lived without the dignity of freedom. At a time when Netanyahu and Gallant find themselves wanted under arrest warrants issued by the ICC and Israel finds itself before the ICJ accused of plausible genocide; at a time when the lifeline of UNRWA has been slashed; when in Gaza, over the past 18 months, nearly 18,000 children have been killed, 70% of all homes have been destroyed and hospitals, schools, universities, libraries, churches and mosques erased; at a time when, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, settler violence is unashamedly unchecked and Israeli military personnel have livestreamed their own human rights abuses; at a time when senior members of this Israeli regime make no secret of their absolute dismissal of a Palestinian state; and when the denial of Palestine, Palestinians and even the basic humanity of the people from those lands is now mainstream, the urgency to recognise has never been so acute.

One hundred and forty-six countries recognise Palestine—more than 75% of the world … They recognise, as should we, that recognition is a basic backstop position that we all urgently need to adopt. …

col 958 **Baroness Janke (Liberal Democrat):** … The illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank since 1967 is the longest military occupation in history. The Palestinian people continue, under occupation, to be deprived of the civil and human rights enjoyed by Israeli citizens. ICJ rulings have recognised the illegality of this occupation and called for Israel to end it. Those who seek to bring peace and security to the region know that this will certainly not be achieved through the brutal subjugation of 5 million Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Extremist settlers, many in the Government, will not achieve peace and security by savagely driving out Palestinians from the West Bank and destroying their homes.

Since the Hamas atrocities of 7 October, at least 1,860 incidents of settler violence in the occupied West Bank have been recorded. There is impunity for the perpetrators. Since 2005, only 3% of investigations into ideologically motivated crimes against Palestinians in the West Bank have led to a full or partial conviction. The repeated, sustained bombardments and destruction of Gaza have deprived generations of Palestinians of family members, homes, healthcare, food and shelter, with vital aid still being denied and blocked. We all deplore the atrocities of Hamas on 7 October and call for all the hostages to be released immediately, but the disproportionate retribution that has resulted in more than 60,000 people in Gaza being killed, including large numbers of civilians, women and children, has sickened the world. …

col 959 **Lord Pannick (Crossbench):** … In international law, a state exists only if four criteria are met. These were set out in the Montevideo convention of 1933 and it seems highly doubtful that Palestine satisfies any of these criteria at the moment.

First, a state must have a defined territory. This Bill would oblige the Secretary of State to recognise a state of Palestine on the basis of pre-1967 borders, but there is plainly no existing Palestinian control within those borders. … A defined territory depends on a peace settlement with Israel.

Secondly, a state must have a permanent population. According to UNRWA, around 2.5 million of the 5 million Palestinians who live in the West Bank and Gaza are refugees. I cannot understand how Palestine can claim to have a permanent population when half the people living there are waiting to live in another state, in Israel.

Thirdly, a state needs a Government who exercise effective control of the territory. But the Palestinian Authority operates in the West Bank and Hamas claims to govern Gaza. A Government of a state must govern the whole state.

Fourthly, the Government of a state must have independence, but the Palestinian Authority currently enjoys very limited powers because of Israeli control. Israel has that control for good security reasons …

I would welcome the existence of a Palestinian state. The Palestinian people are entitled to self-determination. But this will happen only when Palestinian leaders accept the political reality that Israel exists as the homeland of the Jewish people.

I was very grateful that the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Gloucester pointed out that today is the Jewish festival of Purim. We celebrate our victory over Haman, the chief minister to the King of Persia who wished to annihilate the Jewish community over 2,000 years ago. … progress towards the achievement of a state of Palestine is being held up by modern Hamans—lots of them—in the Palestinian community, whose primary objectives remain to kill Jews and to destroy the State of Israel.

col 960 **Baroness Altmann (Non-affiliated):** … The only party which has never accepted the idea of a Palestinian state alongside Israel is the Palestinians themselves. Israel was attacked by its neighbours right from the word go, and has been attacked again and again ever since, with the intent to wipe the Jewish state off the map. Israel has offered peace. It has given up land for peace. It still seeks peace—but with whom? …

At this moment, a Palestinian state within the pre-1967 borders is a fantasy, especially given the realities of the last few decades. Doing this now would be a reward for the jihadis, Islamists and extremist leaders of the Palestinians in Gaza, and their masters in Iran. They do not accept any borders; they want Israel from the river to the sea.

Those who chant the slogan on our streets every week are effectively calling for no two-state solution; they are calling for Israel to be eradicated. Also, in practice, the pre-1967 borders—originally accepted by Israel, of course—proved an unsustainable geographical dividing line, leaving Israel completely vulnerable to invasion and annihilation. Has the Minister been to the Golan Heights, for example, to see the complete overlooking of Israeli towns, leaving them wide open to murderous attack? …

Hamas wants to wipe Israel off the map; nothing less would suffice. Both the Palestinian

authority and Hamas reward their citizens for murdering and attacking Jews. They teach their children to want to kill them and that Israel has no right to exist. A Palestinian state will turn out the same as the post-2006 unoccupied Gaza. Israel withdrew unilaterally, dismantled the Jewish settlements established there, and what happened? The Palestinian leadership spent billions on building tunnels from which to attack and kill Israelis. Intifadas and suicide bombers killed Israelis.

They spent years preparing for 7 October: to torture, rape, kill and kidnap Israelis. They particularly targeted Israelis like me, who most wanted to live in peace with their Palestinian neighbours and who had spent their lives helping Palestinians, ferrying them to Israeli hospitals for treatment, employing them in their homes and engaging with them as friends and neighbours. The very people who wanted a two-state solution have now started to lose faith in it. …

This Bill, if passed, would be a licence for further terrorism, I am afraid. It would be a signal that deliberately torturing and murdering Jews, promising to do it again and again, then hiding safely in tunnels under or behind your own civilians and knowingly, cynically, inviting retaliation from those you have attacked, will bring rewards from civilised countries whose emotions you have deliberately manipulated. …

col 961 **Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative):** … The idea of a Palestinian state did not enter into public debate for very many years after the early discussions of a Jewish state. The First World War and the pogroms led to the Balfour Declaration being made by a British Minister, which favoured a national home for the Jewish people. It sought to protect the rights of the indigenous non-Jews, as has happened, but no such offer was made to create a Palestinian state. It was, in fact, after the murder of 6 million Jews in Europe and the defeat of Nazism that an offer was made in 1948 in Resolution 181 to effectively have a two-state solution. The Israelis accepted it, but the Arabs rejected it immediately and commenced a war on the fledgling state. …

In 2008, Ehud Olmert offered a deal whereby 95% of the land claimed would be given, including East Jerusalem. An international jurisdiction of the Old City was offered—and, again, rejected by Abbas. Finally, the Arab world became impatient with this approach and the Abraham accords inched closer to many of them recognising Israel. As we know, it was the fear of their allies recognising Israel and seeking a harmonious Middle East—which we all seek—that prompted Hamas to carry out the events of 7 October.

In my work on coexistence … I have been in dialogue with those living in East Jerusalem. They specifically tell me they do not want to live in a state controlled by people who would carry out such atrocities on innocent people, as has happened, or by those who have rejected viable peace offers in the past.

Frankly, it is hugely insensitive and somewhat naive to bring this Bill to our Parliament at this time, when Israel has only recently received back some of those innocent hostages, who were tortured mentally and physically. They were hung upside-down, put in cages, starved, told lies about their families and ignored by the utterly useless Red Cross. In effect, this Bill wants to reward the perpetrators. Every poll shows that Hamas would be in power if there were elections. Indeed, there were people who rejoiced with glee as they heard of babies being decapitated and killed in front of their parents. Others were burned alive and innocents were raped. …

Statehood is not simply a prize but a set of responsibilities. The Palestinian Authority falls short of many of those requirements. …

col 962 **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws (Labour):** … What precisely is the United Kingdom waiting for before extending formal recognition to the state of Palestine? The people of Palestine have waited long and painfully. We have heard assurances, but we want to see action. …

There cannot be peace in the Middle East without a two-state solution. Whatever was said just now, people on both sides are suffering the pain of what has taken place over the last

couple of years. You cannot have a two-state solution without a Palestinian state. Recognising Palestine is not something we should do at the end of a set of peace talks. It is what we need to do to get those talks started. …

col 963 Recognising Palestine sends a clear message that we support the people on both sides who want peace. It strengthens the voices of moderates in Israel and Palestine, and it sends a clear message against further Israeli plans to annex the West Bank.

I just want to counter the legal opinion that has been given to your Lordships on what defines statehood. No court would acknowledge what the noble Lord, Lord Pannick, has said when all those criteria have been prevented—indeed, by Israel. …

The settlements themselves have prevented peace in that part of the world. It is said that we would be compensating Hamas; we are compensating breaches of international law by not recognising the state of Palestine.

Lord Verdirame (Non-affiliated): … First, the recognition of states is an exclusive Crown prerogative. Parliament can legislate in any matter and can limit the prerogative, but it is constitutionally a very bad idea for it to do so. …

col 964 Secondly, by forcing the Government to recognise the state of Palestine within the pre-1967 boundaries, the Bill would disincentivise the Palestinians from compromising, and without compromise there cannot be peace. …

The third reason is that recognising Palestine in the current circumstances would reward Hamas. … The fact is that recognition of a new state is a gift to whoever is in power at that point. There are two Palestinian entities that exercise governmental control in the Palestinian territories: the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. All evidence suggests that Hamas is by far the more popular of the two, and it would almost certainly end up being in complete control of the Palestinian state.

Some believe that support for Hamas would wane if we in the West showed greater support for the Palestinian cause, including through recognition. I disagree. I cannot think of many international causes that have received as much support and attention in the West as the Palestinian cause, yet I can see no evidence of such support and attention being rewarded with greater moderation. …

Even if every country in the world unconditionally recognised Palestine as a state tomorrow, the consequence would not be Hamas giving way to a moderate Palestinian faction. What would happen is that Hamas would gain an internationally recognised state. In those circumstances, recognition would not help solve the conflict but escalate it.

Lord Shinkwin (Conservative): … We learned recently that the Americans have been talking directly to Hamas. I wonder: has the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, managed to make contact with Hamas and get its take on the two-state solution? Has she spoken to Khalil al-Hayya, who only a few weeks ago described the 7 October massacre as “a source of pride for our people … and it will be passed down from generation to generation”?

Has she spoken to Ghazi Hamad, who said this barely a fortnight after the massacre: “We will repeat the October 7 attack time and again until Israel is annihilated … We must remove that country, because it constitutes a security, military and political catastrophe … and must be finished”?

col 965 It is clear where Hamas stands on a two-state solution: it rejects it. … Indeed, its barbaric actions on 7 October and statements since provide incontrovertible proof, if any were needed, that it has not only vetoed that solution in effect but set back the cause and the realistic possibility of Palestinian nationhood for generations, if not for ever. …

Baroness Ludford (Liberal Democrat): … Obstacles often cited to the creation of two states are the existence of hundreds of thousands of Israelis living in settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank and the demand that, as well as the many Arab Palestinian Israelis who are Israeli citizens, many more Palestinians should be allowed to return to what is now the State of Israel. In that context, I was pleased to be invited to attend a presentation a few days ago by … an organisation of Israelis and Palestinians called A

Land for All. …

A Land for All has a very different take from the usual one on the route towards peace, security and stability for all. Of course, it envisages two independent states, Israel and Palestine, with a border on the green line, but it proposes what it calls a joint framework, allowing both peoples to live together and apart. It points out that when Palestinians refer to "Palestine", it is to the entire area between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean—we are familiar with this recently—just as for Israelis, "Eretz Israel" refers to the same space, and that no international borders could change these connections to the homeland, and this identity. It proposes that the political solution must reflect the emotional reality and create a framework that allows members of both nations to travel and live throughout the shared homeland on the basis of political separation, yes; geographic and demographic separation, no. It wants both states to be committed to the vision of an open land, where citizens of both countries have the right to travel, work and, over time and with limitations, reside, though not get citizenship in both states. …

col 966 **Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated):** … we have to start with the practical situation on the ground. Hamas is still in place, still armed, still holding hostages, and it will not even accept Israel's right to exist, let alone commit to living in peace alongside it. I listened to all the legal arguments about borders, but the key points seem to me to be practical, because there is no idea about how any borders would be policed and no guarantees for Israel's security. The failure to establish a Palestinian state is not the fundamental cause of the problem. It is actually a result of the fundamental problem, which is that Israel's enemies have always been more determined to prevent the existence of a Jewish state than to allow the establishment of a Palestinian one.

What happened in 1947? It is extraordinary that the noble Baroness just glossed over this when she was introducing her Bill. In 1947, the UN proposed two states side by side. The Jewish people agreed; Israel was established. Seven Arab countries invaded on day one to prevent Israel being established. They were not successful in that, but they did prevent the Palestinian state being established. …

A majority of Israelis have supported a two-state solution. The Palestinians have been offered a state on at least five occasions, most recently in 2008. There was agreement: they were offered at least 95% of what they wanted and there was an agreement about how to deal with the question of the settlements. When Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005, it had a functioning economy; the PA had control of borders, imports and exports; there was an agreement on a seaport; there were plans for an airport. It was a nascent Palestinian state and it was destroyed by Hamas, which cancelled elections, executed rival Palestinians and used Gaza as a base to attack Israel. That is why the Israelis had to build a security barrier: not to imprison Gazans but to protect Israelis. …

col Proposals such as this are a barrier to peace. Recognition will be achieved only when the Palestinians commit to peace and by helping Israelis and Palestinians build trust, negotiate and compromise. Suggesting to Palestinians that there is a short cut, that statehood can be imposed by the international community, will make them less likely to engage in building trust, negotiation and compromise. The UK's role must be to help build long-term stability and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Lord Gold (Conservative): … a vote now to recognise a Palestinian state would deliver a clear message not just to Hamas but to every terrorist organisation in the world that terrorism wins. Undoubtedly, if this Bill becomes law, it will be seen as a reward for the barbarism of 7 October 2023. Many good-thinking people call for a two-state solution but, regrettably, have not thought it through. They believe innocently that the Palestinians want this, but there is no indication that that is the case. Indeed, the opposite is true. Hamas remains in control, as we have seen from the disgraceful scenes of triumphalism in recent weeks, when a few of the hostages—too few—were allowed to leave Gaza but were first wickedly humiliated by their captors. …

Hamas wants just one state: Palestine. Its charter still calls for the destruction of Israel.

Until the Palestinians are represented by those genuinely wanting peace and prepared to recognise the State of Israel, no progress can be made. What is more, Hamas is not alone in having that ambition. Those who chant “from the river to the sea” make clear their rejection of a two-state solution. While Hamas remains in control and there are no other Palestinian representatives with whom Israel could negotiate, the idea of recognising a Palestinian state is fanciful. …

col 968 **Lord Grocott (Labour):** … 146 out of the 193 UN members now recognise Palestine. The number has been growing relentlessly—I would say inexorably. …

The choice for our Government seems clear: do we remain in that diminishing group of states holding out against recognition and eventually and reluctantly take the plunge, or do we take the lead, recognise Palestinian rights and encourage others to do the same? Recognising Palestine is an essential prerequisite for the two-state solution, which is the holy grail repeatedly given to us by whoever wishes to talk about the Israeli-Palestine situation. …

Rejecting the two-state solution means, in practice, the de facto sovereignty of the whole of Israel-Palestine by the Israelis, with the permanent subjugation of millions of Palestinians. The truth is that, however difficult and complicated the establishment of a two-state solution may be, there is, to coin a phrase, no alternative. …

It is no use repeating the mantra that we support the two-state solution but now is not the right time. Now is the right time. …

col 969 **Lord Stevens of Birmingham (Crossbench):** … those of us who support the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis have to face up to the current realities, which, sadly, make the legally prescribed timetable set out in the Bill implausible.

First, that is because, instead of what is proposed in the Bill, the urgent need right now is the release of all remaining hostages, humanitarian aid, the full demilitarisation of Hamas and a start to the reconstruction of Gaza. … Secondly, painful as it is to admit, a Palestinian state conjured into existence right now in the rubble of Gaza, with the trauma of war and the continuing chokehold of Hamas, would, in all likelihood, immediately become a failed state. The institutions of legitimate government do not exist. The Palestinian Authority or the proposed committee of technocrats suggested by the Arab League would lack a monopoly of lawful force and, since 7 October, we have seen precisely what a Hamas exterminationist programme of government, if allowed to continue, would look like.

That points to a third fundamental truth, which is that, notwithstanding all our hopes, in the real world there is not going to be a viable and durable Palestinian state without peace and security guarantees from neighbouring Arab states, not least given that Iran continues to intensify its nuclear weapons programme. In other words, a two-state solution needs a 22-state solution and, rather than symbolic gestures, that is what our country’s practical diplomacy should now be directed towards.

col 970 **Baroness Mobarik (Conservative):** … Palestine is recognised by 75% of the countries around the world, a global majority. The UK has supported the various UN resolutions that affirm the rights of the Palestinian people. It is the occupation that has hampered Palestinians in the achievement of self-determination and territorial integrity. The Palestinians are a highly educated people, with a distinct culture. They need our support to achieve a brighter future and should not have their human rights, which we all take for granted, denied.

Sympathy and symbolic gestures will not result in change. Recognition will give the people of Palestine the dignity and credibility to negotiate as equals. To make a two-state solution a reality means listening to those on the ground, the ordinary peace-loving people of both Israel and Palestine, of whom there are many, despite the divisive rhetoric and misery of this past year and a half. Palestinian and Israeli organisations are working together to shift the dynamics on the ground and combat settler violence and rampages through Palestinian towns and villages, and are educating and campaigning within and among their

communities for diplomacy and non-violence. …
I welcome that in December the Prime Minister endorsed the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace to support civil society in the region as part of the work to negotiate a two-state solution. This is an important and welcome step …

col 971 **Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (Green):** … recognition does not show support for any group or organisation within Palestine. It is a recognition of the need of the Palestinian people for a Palestinian state. …

Lord Alderdice (Liberal Democrat): … The implementation of UN Resolution 181, agreed almost 80 years ago in 1947, has been obstructed. The State of Israel came into being, but neither the state of Palestine nor the special status of Jerusalem have emerged.
col 972 Has the wish for a Palestinian state gone away? Well, the Jewish wish for a state survived for around 2,000 years, so why do they imagine that the Palestinian wish for a state will disappear? …
Those who oppose recognition criticise the other side, quoting the very real and horrible facts of terrorist outrages, quoting legal objections and obstacles, giving special regard to one side in the conflict, blaming the other and giving a veto to a Government who have no intention of producing a peaceful outcome. …
I say to the Minister that those who reject this Bill and the other opportunities that are offered will find that history will judge them harshly. …

Lord Polak (Conservative): … Israel has peace with Egypt; it has peace with Jordan and normalised relations with the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco. Israel does not appear to be the problem. Why do noble Lords who talk about the Balfour Declaration always forget the second part? We hear about the part that says “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”. Then it is a full stop. What about the second part, which says “the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country”?
We know what happened to the Jews in the Arab lands of that period; it is easily forgotten. Symbolic gestures do not create peace. Recognising a Palestinian state outside of negotiations is not a solution. It does not improve governance, security or economic stability. Instead, it sends a dangerous message that violence and extremism can be rewarded. … Hamas refuses to recognise Israel. Crucially, this moment cannot be separated from the horror of 7 October 2023. There can be no reward for barbarism and no reward for terrorism.
col 973 The irony that this debate falls on Purim should not be lost. Purim is a beautiful festival of joy and happiness. We recall the courage of Esther, who stood up to the forces of hatred in ancient Persia when Haman sought to eradicate the Jewish people. The story culminates with Charvona, a servant of the king’s palace, who, though initially aligned with Haman, eventually recognised the evil of his actions. He chose to speak up, revealing Haman’s treachery to the king. What is so striking about Charvona’s decision is his willingness to stand against evil, despite the personal risks. He understood that there comes a moment when one must speak the truth, no matter the cost. Charvona ultimately chose to act with integrity and, in doing so, helped bring about the downfall of Haman and the salvation of the Jewish people. Today, we must take a lesson and stand firm against extremism and hatred.
Silence in the face of the threats posed by Hamas and the Iranian regime and those who wish to destroy Israel is no longer an option. The silent majority in this country who condemn the actions of Hamas and the atrocities committed against Israel must now find their voice. …
In conclusion, on 7 October, Hamas terrorists waged the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust—240 civilians taken hostage, 59 of them still there today. These terrorists openly and proudly share the same anti-Semitic philosophy as the Nazis and Haman from the story. They do not merely seek to attack Israelis; they want to eradicate all Jews. To

support the establishment of a Palestinian state at this time would be to reward their actions. It would betray the victims of 7 October, condone hostage taking, promote anti-Semitism and declare that Jews' lives did not matter. It would threaten the safety and security of the citizens of Israel and Jews around the world, and it would hand a posthumous victory to Hitler, Haman and Hamas. …

Lord Swire (Conservative): … I do not understand why on the one hand we say that Palestinian statehood is conditional when at the same time we are turning a blind eye to the illegal expansion of Israel, building out the possibility of a two-state solution. …

col 974 Regardless of what has been said about the Balfour Declaration, that declaration was a British initiative, and we have an enduring responsibility to ensure that all parts of it are upheld.

The encylopedia definition of ethnic cleansing states that it is "the systematic forced removal of ethnic, racial, or religious groups from a given area … it also includes indirect methods aimed at forced migration by coercing the victim group to flee and"—critically—"preventing its return". … in the Government's opinion, would the forcible removal of the population of Gaza constitute a crime against humanity? …

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): … no one in this House supports terrorism. No one in the British Parliament supports terrorism and we should not even get close to suggesting that that is part of the motive.

Some have argued in the debate that recognition will embolden extremists. The failure to have recognition, some have argued, has already emboldened the extremists we see within the political system in Israel. …

col 975 It has also been interesting to me that no one in this debate—not a single person—has denied that Palestine is an occupied territory, such occupation being illegal under international law. That is helpful. …

The situation on the ground, some noble Lords have argued, prevents us acting now. When did that situation on the ground start? Was it 1979, or in 2025? Some in the debate have suggested that the conditions on the ground now—the presence of Hamas, and the continued displacement and threats—are a reward for terrorism. … Do they feel that it is a grave error and legitimisation of Hamas for the US Government to have sat down bilaterally with Hamas last week, without that being part of any structured involvement of the Palestinian Authority or brokered talks through Qatar?

col 976 Some noble Lords have argued in the debate that, in the absence of finalised agreements on border areas, resource access, infrastructure challenges, displaced people, proposed land swaps that have not been agreed, and lack of normalisation at the start of the political process with its nearest neighbour, the time is not right —"the gesture", as some have suggested. But if those criteria, set by them in this debate, were in place on 18 February 2008, we would not have recognised Kosovo. In recognising Kosovo, the then Labour Government said that the UK was doing so when others did not because they had made the judgment that it would be impossible to see a return to Serbian control. …

The situation on the ground is a political one. The question is whether we want to see two parties negotiate on an equivalent basis regarding an incentive for the future … a political view must see that Palestine has a defined territory, recognised in customary UK foreign policy, and in trade and partnership agreements between His Majesty's Government and Palestine, based on historical borders, as my noble friend indicated. Palestine does have a permanent population within boundaries, as the UK has recognised through direct diplomatic consular representation of UK interests in those territorial areas. It has a Government, who we have supported on a consular, technical and funding basis, and a capacity to enter into relations with other states, which we know is happening now. All the criteria of the 1933 Montevideo convention apply more strongly to Palestine than they did to Kosovo in 2008 or South Sudan in 2011. …

col 977 **Lord Callanan (Conservative):** … these Benches cannot support the Bill. While

we recognise the deep concerns and strong convictions on this matter, we must ensure that any action taken aligns with our principles and our long-standing foreign policy commitments. The Conservative Party has consistently supported a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and the Palestinian people. We agree that it is imperative to offer the people of the West Bank and Gaza the political perspectives of a credible route to statehood and a future of peace and prosperity. However, we maintain that the recognition of a Palestinian state must come at a time when it is most conducive to that peace process. That moment has not yet arrived. Recognition also cannot be the start of the process.

As many others have said, the horrific atrocities committed on 7 October remain fresh in the memory. Hostages are still being held by Hamas and, until recently, Hamas was still being fought in many parts of Gaza. Every effort must be made to ensure that every single hostage is returned safely to their family. This is a matter not merely of diplomacy but of fundamental human rights. Furthermore, any path to peace requires that Hamas no longer governs Gaza and that its capacity to launch attacks against Israel is decisively removed and ended. Ensuring the dismantling of terrorist networks is an unavoidable and necessary step towards a lasting resolution.

If the Palestinian Authority is to take on an expanded role, it becomes even more imperative that it implements the most significant programme of reform in its history. Such reforms must include fundamental changes to welfare and education policies that leave so much to be desired. Transparency, accountability and good governance must be at the heart of any PA Administration. Democratic progress must also be demonstrable. As we have said before, we would also like to see Israel take steps, including in relation to frozen funds and West Bank settlements. …

Finally, it is worth pointing out that it is very unusual for a state to be recognised through an Act of Parliament. Usually, the royal prerogative is used to recognise states. …

col 978 **The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Baroness Chapman of Darlington):** … The current agreement to end the fighting in Gaza is a moment of opportunity after more than a year of agony. We must thank Qatar, Egypt and the US for their tireless mediation efforts and take comfort that British citizen Emily Damari and UK-linked Eli Sharabi have been freed after their horrific ordeal at the hands of Hamas, and that the body of UK-linked Oded Lifshitz has been returned to his family.

The ceasefire remains fragile. We need all parties to sustain the ceasefire and deliver the agreement in full, with the release of all hostages, and move it through the phases and into a lasting peace. …

Even with the welcome ceasefire, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains desperate. We are gravely concerned by recent Israeli restrictions on aid and electricity supplies entering Gaza. Aid should not be used as a political tool, and we urge Israel to lift restrictions immediately to ensure that the supply of humanitarian assistance and access to essential services in Gaza continue. …

We have been clear that Gazans must now be allowed to return to their homes and rebuild. We do not support any forcible removal of people from or within Gaza or the West Bank, or any reduction in the territory of the OPTs.

The Foreign Secretary, along with the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy, has welcomed the Arab initiative of a recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza. It shows a realistic path to the reconstruction of Gaza and improvement of the catastrophic living conditions for Palestinians living there. These plans must be based on a solid political and security framework that is acceptable to, and provides long-term peace and security for, both Israelis and Palestinians. …

col 979 Our funding for the Occupied Palestinian Territories this financial year has included a £2 million uplift through a contribution to the World Bank to deliver water and energy infrastructure across the OPTs. This will support early recovery efforts. We are funding

two roles within the Palestinian Authority's recovery, reconstruction and development team, strengthening the PA's capacity to plan for the next phase in Gaza.

On the West Bank, we have made clear our serious concern at recent Israeli military activity. Israel must show restraint, ensure that the scale of its operations is proportionate to the threat posed and minimise the loss of civilian lives and property. Stability and security are essential at this time. Settlement expansion has reached record levels in the last 12 months. The Israeli Government seized more of the West Bank in 2024 than in the previous 20 years. We are clear that settlements are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace and threaten the viability of a two-state solution.

In October last year, we sanctioned three outposts and four entities that have supported and sponsored violence against communities in the West Bank. We will look at all options to take tougher action. …

Palestinian statehood is the right of the Palestinian people. It is not the gift of any neighbour, and it is vital that the people of the West Bank and Gaza are given the political perspective of a credible route to a Palestinian state and a new future. This needs to be irreversible. That is why this Government unequivocally support a two-state solution that guarantees security and stability for both the Israeli and the Palestinian people. That is why our long-standing position is that we will recognise a Palestinian state at a time that is most conducive to the peace process. …

However, my noble friends and I do not support this Bill today. This is not because we do not support the goal … but because imposing a timetable on this decision would hinder our ability to achieve the goal of a sustainable two-state solution …

This financial year, the UK has provided £129 million to help alleviate the suffering, including £41 million for UNRWA, which is supporting the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Palestinian refugees in the region. UK support has meant that more 500,000 people have received essential healthcare; 647,000 people have received food; and 284,000 people have improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene services. We are working with partners to support the surge in humanitarian aid to Gaza that is needed now.

col 980 It is in the long-term interests of both Israelis and Palestinians that this ceasefire holds and progresses through each of its phases, and that both sides take this opportunity to begin the process of rebuilding a pathway to peace and stability. Peace will be sustainable only if both sides recommit to a renewed peace process resulting in a two-state solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state. This Government are committed to doing all we can both to support this and to recognise a Palestinian state, which we will do not at the end of a process, as some have suggested, but at the point at which recognition by the United Kingdom would have the greatest effect in bringing about the peace and stability that every speaker this afternoon wishes so dearly to see.

Baroness Northover: … I have been in this House for many years. I can hardly count the number of Ministers who have held the line, "Recognised but not now", but have, when out of government, often deeply regretted that action on this was not taken. … The instability in the region and globally, which is terribly affecting Israelis as well as Palestinians, demands that this is more than urgent. …

To read the full transcript see
https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-03-14/debates/DE9808D5-4226-4CFC-8C2A-E543F329064C/PalestineStatehood(Recognition)Bill(HL)

UN General Assembly Resolution 76/10(2021), referred to above by Baroness Northover, can be read at
https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/76/10

The International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion, referred to above by Lord Soames of Fletching, can be read at
https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/186/186-20240719-adv-01-00-en.pdf

Information about the arrest warrants referred to above by Baroness Warsi can be read at https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges

Information about the case before the International Court of Justice referred to above by Baroness Warsi can be read at https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192

The ICJ rulings referred to above by Baroness Janke can be read at https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf and https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240328-ord-01-00-en.pdf and https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240524-ord-01-00-en.pdf

The Montevideo Convention, referred to above by Lord Pannick and Lord Purvis of Tweed, can be read at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1933v04/d134

UN Resolution 181, referred to above by Lord Leigh of Hurley and Lord Alderdice, can be read at https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/181(II)

Information about the sanctions referred to above by Baroness Chapman of Darlington can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-sanctions-target-illegal-outposts-and-organisations-supporting-extremist-israeli-settlers-in-the-west-bank

House of Commons Written Answers

Refugees: Palestinians

Anna Dixon (Labour) [35970] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the need for a resettlement scheme to support Palestinian refugees seeking asylum in the UK.

> **Seema Malhotra:** The UK has a long history of providing protection through various resettlement routes to supporting the most vulnerable people in the world.
>
> We keep all existing pathways under review and we are closely monitoring the events in Gaza,
>
> Palestinians who wish to settle in the UK can do so via the existing routes available which allow a person to apply to work, study, settle or join family in the UK. Further information can be found on the GOV.UK website: Visas and immigration.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-05/35970

Ministry of Defence: Israel

Brian Leishman (Labour) [36363] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the Answer of 14 February 2025 to Question 29341 on Ministry of Defence: Israel, which Israeli officials visited his Department on 5 February 2025.

> **Luke Pollard:** Brigadier General Yaval Harel, Israeli Air Force Head of Personnel Division, led an Israeli Air Force delegation of nine personnel as part of a three-day HR-focussed visit to the UK.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36262

The answer referred to above can be read at https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-05/29341

Israel: Military Aid

Brendan O'Hara (SNP) [34275] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of the report by the British Palestinian Committee entitled British Military Collaboration with Israel, published on 28 January 2025.

Luke Pollard: We will consider the report and continue to act in line with our obligations to International Law.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-27/34275

The report referred to above can be read at https://static1.squarespace.com/static/611a64c35baa3f33556d5454/t/6798b1604694e819057b4184/1738060146895/British+Military+Collaboration+Report

Palestinians: Military Aid

Brian Leishman (Labour) [36260] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the (a) purpose, (b) strength and (c) budget is of the British Support Team in Ramallah.

Luke Pollard: As part of our commitment to stability in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the UK provides the Palestinian Authority with professional support in helping develop capable and responsible security institutions that respect human rights and are accountable to the Palestinian people.

Support to the Palestinian Authority Security Forces is paid for by Ministry of Defence core funds and the UK's Integrated Security Fund (ISF). The amount spent by the UK's ISF in the Financial Year 2024-25 will be published in due course in the respective ISF annual review of 2024-25.

The number of personnel is being withheld in order to protect the security of those personnel and to avoid prejudicing international relations.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36260

Palestinians: Military Aid

Brian Leishman (Labour) [36261] To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, where his Department has recently published information about the British Support Team Ramallah.

Luke Pollard: The Ministry of Defence has not published information about the British Support Team in Ramallah.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-06/36261

Middle East: Diplomatic Relations

Wendy Morton (Conservative) [35680] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure UK participation with regional partners on the Abraham Accords.

Hamish Falconer: The United Kingdom warmly welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel and Arab partners. The Abraham Accords are a historic milestone that bring us closer to the goal of shared prosperity and peace throughout the region. The UK is working with regional partners to ensure the Abraham Accords are an enduring success, and we continue to encourage other countries who have not yet normalised their relations with Israel to do so. We continue to support efforts to ensure normalisation also delivers benefits for the Palestinians.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-05/35680

The Abraham Accords, referred to above, can be read at https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords

Gaza: Children

Tahir ali (Labour) [34923] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of establishing a

medical evacuation team for children in Gaza requiring urgent treatment.

Hamish Falconer: Officials from all relevant Whitehall departments are exploring avenues to ensure our support best meets the needs of the critically ill in Gaza, including children, and we continue to support the provision of healthcare in Gaza and the region. The Government is keeping our humanitarian programme and existing policies on medical evacuations and visa pathways under review in response to events in Gaza.

We have announced £1 million for the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population, delivered through World Health Organisation (WHO) Egypt, to support medically evacuated Palestinians from Gaza. The UK is also supporting the provision of essential healthcare to civilians in Gaza, including support to UK-MED who have now provided vital care to over 330,000 Gazans since the start of the conflict.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-03/34923

The announcement referred to above can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-pushes-for-middle-east-stability-on-ministerial-visit-to-egypt

House of Lords Written Answers

Gaza: Reconstruction

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL5529] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the peace and reconstruction plan for Gaza that was endorsed by the Arab League summit on 4 March.

Lord Collins of Highbury: The Government welcomes the Arab initiative of a recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza. The plan proposes a realistic pathway to the reconstruction of Gaza and, if implemented, will alleviate the catastrophic living conditions for the Palestinians living in Gaza. Reconstruction must be based upon a solid political and security framework acceptable to both Israelis and Palestinians. The Government is clear that Hamas must not govern Gaza, and there should be a central role for the Palestinian Authority. On 8 March, the Foreign Secretary issued a joint statement with European partners commending the serious efforts of the Arab states in developing this plan.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-05/hl5529

The joint statement referred to above can be read at https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-ministers-statement-arab-plan-for-reconstruction-of-gaza

Palestinians: Human Rights

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) [HL5419] To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Collins of Highbury on 17 February (HL4711), what steps they are taking develop a policy on tackling the dehumanisation of Palestinians.

Lord Collins of Highbury: We recognise that dehumanising language and hate speech can lay the ground for and seek to justify identity-based violence in conflict. The proliferation of harmful online narratives and its impact on conflict is an emerging challenge. Partnering with specialist organisations, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is working to identify global best practices for mitigating harmful digital behaviours in conflict - including misinformation, disinformation and hate speech - and considering how action on such digital harms can be integrated into our wider approach to conflict and atrocity prevention.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-03-03/hl5419

The answer referred to above can be read at
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-04/hl4711

Israel and Palestinians: Development Aid

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL5327] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the likely impact of the Associations Bill (Amendment—Donation from Foreign State Entity) 2024, currently before the Knesset, on the United Kingdom's overseas development assistance to Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations.

Lord Collins of Highbury: The UK is deeply concerned about the potential impact of this Bill on civil society and human rights organisations working in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. We have raised our concerns with the Government of Israel. The UK supports civil society organisations in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on a range of issues, including those who do invaluable work promoting and defending human rights.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-02-26/hl5327

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Q147 **Chair (Emily Thornberry, Labour):** … You probably know that we have ourselves just come back from the region … Minister, if there were a visiting delegation of Members of Parliament to the House of Commons, would you expect them to be videoed without their knowledge or consent?

Hamish Falconer (Under-Secretary of State (Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan), Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office): If someone was visiting the House of Commons, certainly not. I would think that that would be very unusual.

Q148 **Chair:** What about if it were put on Instagram and briefed to, let us say, *The Daily Telegraph* in disparaging terms?

Q149 **Chair:** It would be particularly bad, would it not, if it were the Deputy Foreign Minister of Israel being videoed in the UK, and for disparaging comments to be made about her evidence or about a private meeting that she had had with us, let us say? The opposite has just happened to us. A video of us meeting the Deputy Foreign Minister at the Knesset has been posted on Instagram. Certainly, we had no knowledge that it was being videoed, and we assumed, of course, that it would never happen.

I have to say that I have just found out about it, and to say that I am cross might be an understatement. There were many things said in the Knesset by many of its Members that we found quite provocative and indeed, if I am really honest, quite insulting. The attitudes of some Members of the Knesset were remarkably rude. … I would ask the Foreign Office to investigate this, please, to find out why this has happened and who made the decision, and to ask them to take it down and to apologise.

Hamish Falconer: Thank you for bringing it to my attention. It is the first that I have heard about it. I will look into it and come back to the Committee.

Q150 **Chair:** … In your view, why is Israel refusing to move on to stage 2 of the ceasefire deal?

Hamish Falconer: … at this very moment, there are detailed talks between various parties in relation to phase 2, and I would not want to speculate on how those talks are going. Our position is clear: we want to get through all three phases of the ceasefire; we want to bring this conflict in Gaza, which has had such terrible consequences both for Israelis and Palestinians, to an end. …

Q151 **Chair:** Have there been discussions around the possibility that it is because

Netanyahu needs to keep his Government going until the end of March, when he is going to have a Budget before the Knesset and, in order to keep the Government going, he has to pass that Budget? The concern would be that, if they move to stage 2, there would be individuals within the Government who might withdraw their support, and so the best thing for him to do is to keep things going until then and to get his Budget passed.

Hamish Falconer: … I would not want to be drawn into providing too much commentary about internal Israeli politics. I recognise that for the Israeli side, phase 2 is complicated and difficult, and you can see, from the public statements of various Israeli Ministers, that there clearly is a range of views within the coalition Government …

Q155 **Chair:** There is a conference in June that the French and the Saudi Arabians are going to be holding. Could you help us with what the purpose of that is? …

Hamish Falconer*:* The purpose of the June conference being held by the Saudis and the French is to try to advance a two-state solution. … We support the conference and will be looking to play our full part …

Q156 **Chair:** Could this be a moment when a coalition of nations—the French, the British, the Australians and various others—come together as western nations and recognise the Palestinian state, and perhaps start engaging properly with the Arab League's initiative on the rebuilding of Gaza?

Hamish Falconer*:* We are engaging properly on the Arab initiative. …

Q157 **Chair:** In order for the west to show good faith and real commitment to the Arab League plans, do you agree that now might be the time for us to be recognising Palestine, along with a series of other nations, so that we can come to the table with good faith and join the Arab League in pushing for a rebuilding of Gaza and the development of a Palestinian state?

Hamish Falconer*:* We support a Palestinian state. We want to be in a position to recognise it as the inalienable right of the Palestinian people. …

The diplomacy and the developments in the region are incredibly sensitive, so I am not in a position to make a further announcement this morning about the timing or the method by which we might end up recognising a Palestinian state, other than that it continues to be our hope and our commitment. …

Q158 **Phil Brickell (Labour):** … what are the Government doing to ensure that the Israeli Government comply with the UK's demands to unconditionally and immediately lift restrictions on humanitarian relief into Gaza?

Hamish Falconer*:* As I am sure you saw, we put out a statement on 5 March with our French and German partners. I put out a statement this morning about the restrictions on electricity into Gaza. …

In the early phases of the ceasefire and until quite recently, there was a very notable uptick in the amount of aid going into Gaza. Is that enough? No, it is not enough. Indeed, the kind of aid that went in was still subject to restrictions, particularly around items that could be dual-use. The consequence of those restrictions is very significant on the people of Gaza because much of what was restricted was the kind of shelter required to try to make life in Gaza more habitable as the temperature has dropped.

There is no neat and easy answer to this. As you say, we have been calling repeatedly for a lifting of restrictions, which has not happened. We have made a statement about the latest further restrictions from the Israelis. We will continue to work with our partners and to talk to the Israeli Government about this, and we will not stop until we see the progress that we need to in terms of aid access.

Q159 **Chair:** … why the Israelis will be restricting certain goods going in because they say that it is for dual use may need to be explained for the public. …

Hamish Falconer*:* … "Dual use" is a term that tends to mean items that could be used for both military and civilian purposes. In this context, it has been used, for example, to

restrict tents going in because the claim is that the poles could be used as weaponry. There have been restrictions on sleeping bags because they are said to be in camouflaged colour. There have been restrictions on water purification units because there is some fear that they could be used for some other purpose.

The nature of the dual use restrictions that Israel has imposed has been so far-reaching as to make … providing the aid required to help people respond to the colder conditions of winter—very difficult indeed. …

Q160 **Phil Brickell:** Are you able to confirm that it has been impressed upon the Israeli Government that they have an obligation under international humanitarian law to allow the free and unimpeded access of aid to Gaza?

Hamish Falconer*:* I can, yes.

Q161 **Richard Foord (Liberal Democrat):** Last September, the Foreign Secretary assessed that, overall, Israel is not committed to compliance with international humanitarian law in Gaza, which led to the partial suspension of arms exports. Why did it not lead to a full suspension of arms exports?

Hamish Falconer*:* It is really important, when we talk about the arms, to start with the context, which is that this is a small amount of arms compared to the overall quantity of arms that the IDF has. …

The assessment that we made was that there was a serious risk of breaches of IHL, and so we made restrictions with one caveat, which I will come to. The restrictions that we made were for the permission to sell weapons that could be used offensively in the conduct of hostilities that could pose a risk of a breach of IHL.

What are the things that are not included? It includes things that are not for use in hostilities. There are dual-use items such as food processing chemicals that we satisfied ourselves were not for use for these purposes. There were things like components for air defences, which were clearly not being used in relation to the activities in Gaza.

I have seen some commentary about the numbers. There are quite a large number of things where a licence is still in issue, whereby it would be easy to draw the conclusion that that means that we are still selling arms. Lots of this stuff is dual-use stuff, where we have to satisfy ourselves that it is not arms. There has to be a licence because they could be used in other contexts, but in this context we are confident. …

Q162 **Hamish Falconer***:* We made a specific carve-out for F-35s, because to do so was in the interests of international peace and security. The F-35 programme is a very complex, multi-nation fighter jet … We provide components to a global spares pool under an agreement. Where those components were being sold directly to Israel, those licences were suspended. Where those components were being supplied to the global pool, we could not suspend those licences without imperilling the overall F-35 supply chain, which, as I am sure members of this Committee in particular would understand, would have significant, far-reaching ramifications, given the role of F-35s right across our allies and indeed in our own region of Europe.

Q163 **Richard Foord:** You talk about introducing this so-called balancing test of international peace and security. How is that consistent with the UN arms trade treaty?

Hamish Falconer*:* I hope that you will understand that, while I will not point to the exact part of the treaties, there is provision for international peace and security. This has been looked at in great detail, as you would expect, by legal advisers right across Government, and we were satisfied that that was consistent with our international legal commitments.

Q164 **Chair:** Holland produces some spare parts for the F-35s as well, does it not? There has recently been a challenge in the courts saying that it should not be supplying those parts for F-35s, because they could be used in Israel. Given the way that the Israelis were using F-35s, they could, in turn, be used for breaches of international humanitarian law. The courts in Holland have said that it can stop selling those parts, or label them as not for use in Israel …

Hamish Falconer: … this is going to be tested by judicial review in the Al-Haq case …

Q166 **Richard Foord:** … If this is a balancing exercise, between IHL on the one hand and the serious prejudice to international peace and security on the other, what thought has been given to the possibility that, when we see an acceleration in breaches of international humanitarian law, we might then up the pressure on arms exports through this carve-out for the F-35?

Hamish Falconer: I would not describe the balancing test as one that balances IHL against international peace and security. IHL, in applying the law, allows for decision makers to consider the balance between international peace and security and some of the other provisions of international humanitarian law.

I would not want to quite accept your framing that it is IHL on one side and international peace and security on the other. IHL considers questions of international peace and security. If the question is whether we will, in the face of further concerns, take actions on the F-35, I would just restate our position. We believe that the continued operation of the F-35 programme is critical to international peace and security for a whole range of our neighbours …

Q167 **Richard Foord:** It seems to me that the Government have not denied that the position on the F-35 carve-out is in breach of international humanitarian law.

Hamish Falconer: … No, we have not. We are saying that it is consistent with international humanitarian law, and it will be tested in a judicial review.

Q168 **Richard Foord:** In correspondence that I have seen between Minister Doughty and the Chair of the Business and Trade Committee, it seems to me that the UK is potentially willing to admit that there are violations of the Geneva conventions, but that those are outweighed by the fact that the F-35 is supplied to a partnership of 20 nations and that there are other uses of the F-35 in the world, which means that international peace and security could be prejudiced by any withholding of F-35 components. …

Hamish Falconer: … if international humanitarian law provides, in its provisions, for a balancing act, which is quite common in both international and domestic law, it is not fair to say, and the Government would not accept, that the continued sale of F-35s is in contravention of or in some way outwith international humanitarian law. …

Q169 **Richard Foord:** … In recent days, it feels as though there has been an escalation in breaches of international humanitarian law by Israel—for example, the withholding of electricity. Would the Government consider keeping in play the parts that we export for the F-35 that we have no means of tracking and which might go to our allies and, subsequently, go to Israel for potential use in Gaza, should the war flare up again?

Hamish Falconer: … There are two particular elements of recent announcements that have caused us concern. One is about the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza … I have been clear this morning that, in order to be compliant with international humanitarian law, it is very important that energy is provided to Gaza for de-salination and many other purposes that are essential for supporting life in Gaza. …

Aphra Brandreth (Conservative): … In relation to a ban on the export of arms to Israel, the Prime Minister was right to utilise our assets in the region, particularly the RAF and Royal Navy, in response to the recent drone and missile attacks from Iran. On the other hand, by banning exports, we have limited Israel's options to defend itself.

I just wonder if you can see how these policies may appear to some not to be fully aligned. …

Hamish Falconer: I should say that it is a matter of regret that we have suspensions of arms to Israel. We would like to be in a position where … our deep partnership with Israel could continue on that basis across a whole range of fields.

As you say, we did mobilise assets to defend Israel, consistent with its completely legitimate right to self-defence under international humanitarian law. We deplore Iranian

attacks on Israel and the malign influence that they have in the region. These two things are in some tension. We wish to act in defence of Israel against Iran, but we also want to ensure that all of our partners, friends and allies take a rigorous approach to international humanitarian law. …

You can be most critical with your friends, and so we are clear with Israel about where we differ from it. …that does not mean that we have in any way become misty-eyed about what is happening in the Middle East. We are clear on the threats that Iran poses to Israel, Syria, Lebanon and a whole range of regional partners, as well as, indeed, the threat that they pose here. …

Q170 **Alex Ballinger (Labour):** What has the UK's response been to the International Court of Justice's ruling in July that the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories were illegal?

Hamish Falconer*:* … we are still considering the advisory opinion …

On the substantive point that you make, we agree that the settlements are illegal. That has been our long-standing position, and we want to see them ended. …

Q171 **Alex Ballinger:** We were in the West Bank a couple of weeks ago and saw, as many others have reported, some of the extremist actions by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in Area C. Schools were being burned, mosques were attacked and livestock was being stolen. … It feels like the UK's response of just providing advice to businesses not to trade in those settlements is not enough in that context. …

Hamish Falconer*:* Since this is the first time that settler violence has come up, let me say that the Government track this closely. We recognise both the increase in such settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the very worrying increase in violence in relation to settlements. We condemn that completely, and put in place sanctions in October to reflect the strength of our feeling on these questions. …

We advise British businesses in pretty strong terms to bear in mind our view on the illegality of settlements under international law when considering their investments and activities in the region. …

Q173 **Hamish Falconer***:* If you were found to be inaccurately labelling goods that were traded into the UK or the EU, there would be consequences. …

Q175 **Hamish Falconer***:* … I would have to come back to you with what the precise legal consequences are for businesses that inaccurately label their places of origin for their goods …

Q176 **Chair:** They just have to label them as Israeli. That is what they do.

Hamish Falconer*:* … we are aware of the challenges of ensuring that goods are properly and accurately labelled. …

Q178 **Alex Ballinger:** With all the breaches of international humanitarian law, the ICJ rulings and the other challenges with Israel that we are going to hear about later … is it appropriate for us to be pursuing a trade deal with Israel? …

Hamish Falconer*:* We are reviewing a number of our trade agreements and negotiations across the world, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade will be setting out a bit more where we intend to prioritise in due course.

Q179 **Uma Kumaran (Labour):** The Government have condemned some comments by the Israeli Government and Ministers on proposing the annexation of the West Bank. … I would argue that the annexation has already begun, but I would like to know what actions the Government would take if there were an attempt to annex the West Bank.

Hamish Falconer*:* … I really would just re-emphasise our concern about the expansion of settlements and of violence. We are absolutely clear that we do not want to see annexation. We would consider it illegal under international law. …

Q180 **Hamish Falconer***:* There are two main scenarios for what is going to happen next. One scenario, which I very much hope that we see, is that we are able to try to return

towards something that looks like a path towards a two-state solution, which involves the long-sought normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. …
I hope that we are in a position where the Abraham accords started under the last Trump Administration are in a position of being completed …
The alternatives, including annexation, are disastrous. They are a breach of international law. If they were to come about, we would, of course, have more to say, given the magnitude of what that would involve for Israel, for Palestine and for the region. …

Q181 **Hamish Falconer***:* … I recognise that across Israeli politics, there is a whole range of views about where we get to. There are those in Israel who understand that in order to live in harmony with their region and to complete the Abraham accords, a two-state solution will be necessary.

Q182 **Chair:** … the clear impression that we got from our visit was that the Israelis do not really care that much about what the international community thinks or says. …
We certainly met many more people in the leadership and among politicians who were interested in annexation of the West Bank than in a two-state solution. Given that … What is the plan? … What are we going to do if they annex? …

Hamish Falconer*:* … I am pleased to confirm to the Committee the strength of our views on these questions, but I am afraid that I will not be drawn into speculating on what we might do.

Q183 **Hamish Falconer***:* I can assure you that we will do something.

Q184 **Alex Ballinger:** … might you consider having a special envoy for the Abraham accords from the UK?

Hamish Falconer*:* We do try to show leadership on a range of issues. …

Q185 **Hamish Falconer***:* … we would like to play our full role in trying to bridge some of the differences that exist between those who are not yet signatories to the Abraham accords and the Israelis. …
I want to be clear that we are not happy with the status quo. …

Q186 **Uma Kumaran:** I went into the Occupied Palestinian Territories a few weeks ago, into Area C, and met Bedouin women. Some of the stories that they told me and the images and videos that I saw on their phones of the violence that they are facing, in particular as women and their children, and young girls, are shocking and harrowing … I want to know what steps the Government are taking to prevent the indiscriminate violence and attacks on civilians that many people in the West Bank are facing. …

Hamish Falconer*:* … I too hear truly awful stories of violence in the West Bank, where there has been a very concerning trend. … Stability in the West Bank is vitally important too, and we are concerned by some of the developments there. We are particularly concerned by the violence against civilians that you described. …

Q187 **Uma Kumaran:** … People want to see us hold perpetrators to account in line with their obligations under international law. They want to see Britain leading from the front. …

Hamish Falconer*:* On settlers in particular, there are questions in our mind about what role we can play to try to practically reduce the violence. The sanctions in October were far-reaching and aimed at the perpetrators of violence, as well as those who provide the infrastructure required for the construction of settlements. …

Q188 **Abtisam Mohamed (Labour):** … Palestinians are going through annexation now, and it is currently happening. What specific action will we be taking now to prevent annexation from taking place? …

Hamish Falconer*:* … I took some of the questions about annexation to be about formal, legal annexation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. That is not to say that we are not focused on the elements of practical annexation. You cannot get aid into Gaza without the agreement of the Israelis: that is, clearly, very significant de facto control. You have seen yourselves the degree of control that is exerted in the West Bank as well.

We want to see, in both Gaza and the West Bank, a situation where normal Palestinian life can return. We do not want to see forcible displacement. We do not want to see an expansion of settlements and settler violence. …

Q189 **Abtisam Mohamed:** What specific action are we taking to prevent the expansion of settlements?

Hamish Falconer*:* Beyond the sanction measures and the pretty strong diplomatic language that we have used about them, we have worked with partners. We have made joint statements. We have sought, at each and every stage, to create the conditions where settlements are not happening. …

Q190 **Abtisam Mohamed:** Israel continues to ignore our condemnations, to do as it pleases, and to either cross an uncrossable line or set new precedents that it seems to jump over. Will there be a red line for us where we say, "That's it. Enough is enough. This will now result in the lack of viability of a potential two-state solution"? When is that red line going to be for us?

Hamish Falconer*:* Honestly, the problem with ever saying that a two-state solution is not viable is that the alternatives are definitely and considerably worse. …

Q191 **Abtisam Mohamed:** You referred to trade earlier. … that businesses are expected to bear in mind the illegality of trade that comes from settlements. Why would we not consider banning the imports of settlement goods? …

Hamish Falconer*:* I am going to set out the position legally as it is in both the UK and the EU. …

Q192 **Hamish Falconer***:* There is a different legal status for goods from within and from outside the green line, which is why I said to the Chair that if you breach the labelling so that you try to pretend, in either the UK or the EU, that your goods are from inside the green line, when they are from outside, there are consequences, because there are different legal structures. We and the Europeans have preferential access for Israeli goods from within the green line, but that does not extend to settlement goods …

Q193 **Chair:** The Israelis refuse to change the labelling. They do not distinguish. I have always gone out of my way to support Israel, and I will buy Israeli goods; I will also go completely out of my way to ensure that I do not buy settler goods, but sometimes I just do not know, because they are labelled as Israeli. …

Hamish Falconer*:* … we are conscious of this issue. We keep the advice very regularly updated. Clearly, there is an issue with the labelling of Israeli goods. The whole system of international trade relies on accurate labelling at the point of origin. If it were not to be accurately labelled, that does undermine the whole system. …

Stephen Hickey (Director, Middle East and North Africa, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office): On the question of tackling the growth in settlements, in addition to all the bilateral measures that the Minister has set out, the role that the UK plays with our European allies and the United States in pushing back against the growth in settlements is very important.

I know that this was on the agenda for the EU's Association Council with Israel two weeks ago. As the Minister said, we know that the United States is keen to progress the Abraham accords to and secure normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, but it will be very challenging and very difficult for that to happen unless there is a Palestinian state in place. …

Q195 **Uma Kumaran:** The Israeli Defence Minister stated in February that Israel will not allow the return of at least 40,000 forcibly displaced Palestinians to their homes in the West Bank. What is the UK doing to prevent this forced displacement and escalation of violence in line with our obligations under international humanitarian law?

Hamish Falconer*:* We have been clear that we do not support forcible displacement. The whole thrust of the Arab plan that was announced following their conference and that we

welcomed last week was that there should be no forcible displacement of Palestinians and that there should be a programme for reconstruction that allows Gazans to stay in their homes, if they wish. Clearly, there will be some Gazans who do wish to leave. The rubble in Gaza is testament to the degree of destruction that has happened there. People will make their own choices about where they want to be, but we do not want to see forcible displacement. …

We have been watching events carefully in Jenin. We do not want to see forcible displacement in any part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories or, indeed, anywhere. …

Q196 **John Whittingdale (Conservative):** Minister, you have been admirably clear about the position of the Government in seeing a two-state solution as the only possible way forward. … It is fair to say that when we spoke to Israeli politicians from all parties, it seemed further away than ever before.

The reason is the utter trauma that Israel still suffers as a result of 7 October and the determination that it can never happen again. They said to us very clearly that they would never accept the idea of living next door to a state controlled by people who wanted to destroy them. … What can we do to try to win support in Israel by giving them that kind of reassurance? …

Hamish Falconer*:* … I visited Israel in December, relatively shortly after the 7 October attacks, and that palpable sense of trauma, which I know you feel even now, was so visceral, even from the Israelis who had spent the longest time working on outreach and on pro-Palestinian activities—what would sometimes be described as the peaceniks of the kibbutzim. That trauma was clearly found right across Israeli society, as it is, of course, also in Palestinian society. …

As you would expect, I see families of the hostages on a regular basis, and you can hardly get your mind around the awfulness of the situation that they live in, day in and day out. … One can only imagine what it is like to be an Israeli or Palestinian politician in these moments. It is incredibly hard—I make no bones about it—for either side to see the route towards a two-state solution, given that that requires, exactly as you say, a shared commitment to each other's security. …

Q197 **John Whittingdale:** What do you hope that we can achieve at the conference coming up in June, in terms of trying to begin to give that reassurance?

Hamish Falconer*:* The June conference is important, but my own experience is that politics does not tend to revolve around international conferences. My hope is that we are able to build up from the Arab proposals towards an answer for what is going to happen next in Gaza that provides safety, security and stability for the Gazan people, that provides for the release of all hostages, and that gives Israel confidence that what happens next in Gaza will not be a return to Hamas plans for tunnels, violence, rape and murder. …

Q198 **John Whittingdale:** We talked to them about the possibility of achieving a two-state solution one day. They spoke of it being generations away, and the recommendation that they made was education. …

Hamish Falconer*:* … In 2014, I was in the Foreign Office and was sent briefly, as part of a rapid deployment team, to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as part of the crisis then. I remember seeing a friend who had gone to university with me, who had done Aliyah and was now an Israeli citizen and a rabbi there. I asked him about the route out. At the time, as will you probably recall, there had been terrible violence on both sides. People in Gaza were suffering then as they suffer now. He gave me a similar answer then, which was, "It is not possible now. There are not partners for peace. We have to wait and hope that it will change."

This is so much worse than what I saw in 2014. … The hope that the next generation will be able to address the fractured politics of this one is, I think, said more in hope than expectation. … We need to work with urgency and determination, and that is why I am being so stubborn about the two-state solution. I truly could not bear to go back, 11 years

from now, and find the situation no better …

On the questions of education and PA reform, there were some very important provisions in the Colonna report. … the Colonna report, conducted by the well-respected former French Foreign Minister into the operations of UNRWA, looked in particular at some of the questions of the content of the textbooks provided both by UNRWA and others in Gaza. … There were provisions in the Colonna report, which we fully support, to try to make sure that the textbooks in Gaza and across the Occupied Palestinian Territories are teaching a curriculum that can help enable peace rather than hate. …

We are also clear that there needs to be reform of the Palestinian Authority. It plays a very important role, but there are changes that need to be made in order to give Palestinians, first of all, as well as the rest of us, the confidence that the PA is able to discharge its functions in an effective way and that it can be a good partner for peace. …

Q199 **John Whittingdale:** And the support that we are giving will not be affected by the reduction in overseas aid?

Hamish Falconer*:* The Prime Minister has been clear that Gaza is one of the areas that will get particular protection from the cuts …

Q200 **Aphra Brandreth:** Just to be clear, do you agree, Minister, that Hamas must play no part in the future governance or administration of Gaza?

Hamish Falconer*:* I do. Hamas have committed the most astonishing acts of brutality. … how could any Israeli politician have any confidence that an Administration controlled by Hamas could be a real partner for the Israelis?

Q201 **Aphra Brandreth:** … at the beginning of last year, we had initially paused funding towards UNRWA because of information that suggested that its officials had been involved in the 7 October attacks. In the middle of last year, that was changed. There are still some of our allies who are continuing to pause aid to UNRWA. What conversations have you had with UNRWA officials or your counterparts that assure you that there is confidence in the organisation?

Hamish Falconer*:* … we have engaged closely with the Colonna review and its recommendations, and we are putting our money where our mouth is. We are supporting the changes that UNRWA needs to make through the Colonna process with funding. …

Given that you have given me the opportunity, I would just like to address some of the recent allegations about UNRWA—in particular, the comments of Emily Damari upon her release, where she said that she believed she had been held in an UNRWA hospital. We have talked to UNRWA about those very serious and concerning claims. UNRWA makes the reasonable point that many of its hospitals have, at various points, not been in its control. There have been points where they have been forcibly evacuated, or their operation has not been possible, but these are, clearly, very serious concerns to have been raised, particularly by a British national who was held by Hamas for an incredibly long time. We welcome UNRWA's commitments to do an independent review into those claims, which we will update the House on once we have the findings.

Q202 **Blair McDougall (Labour):** … I wonder what lessons the British Government have drawn from the experience of dealing with attempts to release the hostages over the last 18 months, both during the period of intense violence and since then. …

Hamish Falconer*:* This has been just the most astonishingly difficult period for the hostage families, as we all know. …

One feels the deepest empathy for those who still have their relatives and loved ones probably underground somewhere in Gaza, when many of them do not know whether they are alive or dead, after we have seen many incredibly welcome releases. What it must feel like for them, including Avinatan's mother, who I met last week, to be in these circumstances is beyond bearing. …

Q203 **Hamish Falconer***:* There are three elements to these cases, each of which is quite

distinct. One is whether negotiations are possible. Often, they are not. We will not make substantive concessions to those who take our nationals hostage. …

… there are often two views about who the best kind of negotiator is. Often it will be … a professional diplomat deeply steeped in the region and, hopefully, steeped in the relationships with those involved. …

In other cases … quick and quiet is not an option, and you end up in a longer and more drawn-out situation. …

The second element is supporting the family. These are emotional tragedies on a scale unlike any other consular case. It is vital that we rise to meet that where we can, particularly over the duration that these cases can often take. …

Q206 **Uma Kumaran:** … Having walked through Hostage Square myself, we cannot overstate the level of trauma and grief that the Israeli people are feeling. It is palpable. It is in the air. We were there on the day of the Bibas family funerals, and it was devastating. There is a replica of a hostage tunnel in Hostage Square, which I walked through. It was just a couple of metres, and that was enough for me to want to get out of there. I cannot imagine what the remaining hostages have gone through. We also met hostages who had been released, and their testimony was so moving.

What is the UK's role in ensuring that the remaining hostages and bodies are released as quickly as possible? This is one of the key points that is holding up any lasting peace deals. …

Hamish Falconer*:* I think particularly of Avinatan. I want all of the hostages and bodies back, but Avinatan has a British mother. He is one of the last remaining UK-linked hostages, and so we are particularly focused on his return. He is a relatively young man who was in good health when he was taken, and his sister very movingly made exactly the point that you have just made: "Why does everybody think that he will be fine when he has been underground for so long?" …

Q207 **Chair:** Just so that we put it on the record, we heard from Sharone Lifschitz, whose father was killed. She gave evidence to the Committee.

During our visit to Israel, we also met an extraordinary woman called Aviva Siegel, who was also in the White House, talking to President Trump. She was a hostage for about 50 days. She walked through a long tunnel and ended up having to lie on a couple of mattresses with her husband and two young women. The young women were taken off, raped and abused. They did not look at anyone. They did not talk to anyone. They kept not making eye contact, trying to make themselves as small as possible. She was released after about 50 days. She had to wait for about 500 days before her husband was released, and he could hardly move because his muscles had wasted away during that time. Also, his eyes did not work, because he had been in the dark all that time. These sorts of details are just heartbreaking.

We also heard from Dahlia Kusnir, who is the sister-in-law of the two brothers whom Hamas has been particularly manipulative and brutal about, filming one of the brothers being separated from the other. She has got one brother back, but not the other. … We all remember Aviva saying that she also thinks about the women in Gaza, what is happening to the mothers, and what the future is. …

Hamish Falconer*:* I have met some of those women. Their strength, dignity and bravery—words honestly fail me. …

Alex Ballinger: … We met lots of peace-building organisations in Israel, both Palestinian and Israeli. They have been affected quite badly by the USAID cuts … We wanted to hear more about the UK's plans for peace-building in the region, and particularly the Prime Minister's commitment to an international fund to bring other countries together to invest.

Q208 **Chair:** What we did not understand when we went was that, given that the Prime Minister has announced our big contribution that is going to be a major push to this fund, the Israelis are saying that there is going to be an 80% tax. …

Hamish Falconer: … There are proposals in the Knesset for taxation provisions around NGOs, as you describe. We are concerned by those proposals and are engaging with our Israeli counterparts about them. …

On the proposals for a peace-building fund, we see … the vital role that grassroots efforts to try to bring the communities together can play. We recognise the acute sensitivity at this moment, so we are looking at these proposals very carefully to try to build an approach that will work and that will be able to navigate the deep political divergence between the two sides …

Q209 **Alex Ballinger:** Will peace-building efforts be protected as we are approaching the UK's cuts to the aid budget?

Hamish Falconer: Peace is by far the most effective intervention in any of these situations, so it will continue to be a priority.

Q211 **Chair: Hamish Falconer:** We are engaging with the Israelis about the legislation to try to make sure that our aid and that of our partners is in a position to reach Palestinians, and indeed Israelis, in the way that we would want.

Q213 **Abtisam Mohamed:** You referred earlier to the recognition of a Palestinian state. What are the preconditions for recognition to take place?

Hamish Falconer: We want progress. … We have relatively few strong levers, and recognition is one of them. I would like recognition to be a major contribution to advancing down that difficult and fraught path.

I do not have a set of preconditions to tell the Committee, such as, "Once X, Y, and Z are met, we will recognise." I am clear that we want to recognise a Palestinian state. We want to see that Palestinian state able to function effectively, and we have discussed this morning some of the impediments that could exist to its effective functioning. We want to try to create the conditions in which international diplomacy can move forward on a two-state solution.

I do not want to prejudge what those circumstances might be, other than to say that I remain committed. I want to do this. I want to recognise a Palestinian state. I want to do that as quickly as we possibly can, but I do not want to do it in the abstract. I want to do it as part of a practical contribution to moving forward.

Q214 **Abtisam Mohamed:** If the Arab peace plan leads to the June conference, and countries such as France and others recognising Palestine, would we potentially at that point have recognition as well?

Hamish Falconer: I do not want to be drawn on hypotheticals …

Q215 **Abtisam Mohamed:** The frustration for Palestinians, or anybody else watching this, is that this has been said for decades: that we will continue to say we are going to recognise Palestine as part of a peace process. Decades on, we are still saying the same thing. …

Hamish Falconer: I understand the frustration. … We are saying we want recognition as part of a contribution to moving forward. I am afraid I am just not going to be drawn on what moment we might think is most appropriate.

Q216 **Abtisam Mohamed:** Do you think that Israel has the right to veto recognition?

Hamish Falconer: No.

Q217 **Abtisam Mohamed:** Even though they voted in the Knesset against recognition, you think we can still move forward, potentially in the near future, recognising a Palestinian state.

Hamish Falconer: I want to be clear that Israel does not have a veto on whether or not the Palestinians have a right to a state, but in practice a viable Palestinian state will require negotiations with Israel. …

Q218 **Abtisam Mohamed:** Recognition is conditional, then. It is not an inalienable right if it requires what you have just said. It is a conditional right, not an inalienable right.

Hamish Falconer: No. I am clear that the Israelis do not have a veto on a state, but practically, in order to make a Palestinian state work, you would need to have negotiations with the Israelis.

Q219 **Abtisam Mohamed:** To what extent are our officials involved in the Arab peace plan?

Hamish Falconer: We have engaged closely. …

Stephen Hickey: … We have been closely engaged for over a year now with Arab countries, European partners and the United States. In particular, we were involved in setting up a process called the Quint plus Quint, so the five key western countries and the five key Arab states. That has met at Foreign Secretary level now four times, most recently in Munich.

In between those meetings, we have been engaging in particular with Egypt and Jordan, as two of the most active Arab states on the Arab plan, on how to make that Arab plan as strong and as credible as possible. …

Q220 **Alex Ballinger:** Continuing on Palestine recognition, everything we saw from our visit to Israel, in the rhetoric from the members of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and when we spoke to the Deputy Foreign Minister, was about the two-state solution being completely off the table. Many of them were actively talking about the annexation of the West Bank. … If we do not recognise Palestine soon, is there a risk that there will not be an opportunity for us to recognise it at all, because of all these steps that Israel is taking?

Hamish Falconer: We are very mindful of the questions of the physical viability of a two-state solution. … We do not want to see the viability of a two-state solution fade into the distance. We are making those points with some force to our Israeli counterparts. …

Q221 **Alex Ballinger:** At that point, might we recognise Palestine as a statement, rather than as a process towards a two-state solution?

Hamish Falconer: … I do not want to do anything as a statement. People—the Palestinians and indeed hostage families, Israelis—have had enough of statements. …

Q222 **Hamish Falconer:** It is clear from everything that has been said over the last hour and a half that there are many areas where we, the Government, are deeply frustrated, where we are making statements we would not wish to make about developments in Israel-Palestine. Does that mean that we are having no influence on what is happening on the ground? I do not think so. …

… the work that we have done since we became the Government has made a difference, whether that is the efforts that we took in August at the Security Council to try to ensure that there was a pause in fighting for polio vaccinations, which did indeed happen, the temporary relaxations that allowed for more aid in, the painstaking work to get the 511 people with UK links out of Gaza, including a family of three just a few days ago, or some of the other efforts that we have taken to try to ensure that hostage families are supported. This is not easy. … I would much prefer to be telling you about positive progress on a whole range of bigger questions. …

Q223 **Richard Foord:** … we heard some frustration when we were in the West Bank about how the Arab plan was being developed without a Palestinian voice at the table. …

Hamish Falconer: … we see the Palestinian Authority, the legitimate voice of the Palestinians, as a very important part and party to all of these discussions. …

Uma Kumaran: We have been talking about the recognition of the state of Palestine. There is a real risk here that there will be nothing left to recognise very soon. We are seeing the annexation of the West Bank in front of our eyes. We have seen huge swathes of Gaza reduced to rubble. They have cut electricity. They have cut supplies. There will be nothing or no one left to recognise soon. …

Q224 **Blair McDougall:** … When we were in the region, we were told about the hundreds

of thousands of Palestinian children who are deeply traumatised psychologically. There are a large number of Palestinian children also with pretty horrific injuries. I wonder what support we can give, both psychological and medical, to make sure that those kids get the help they need to recover from the last 18 months.

Hamish Falconer*:* … There are three elements to this. The first is clearly the circumstances for children in Gaza, who are like every other civilian in Gaza. We have talked about some of the restrictions on aid and on energy, and what the effect of that might be. …

We are working, as I have just alluded to, to try to ensure that those who need to leave Gaza for urgent medical reasons are able to do so. …

We will also support Project Pure Hope in a very small number of cases, to help Gazan children leave Gaza and get access to medical treatment here. There are few cases where that is going to be the most appropriate intervention. Most Gazan children will need to be looked after in Gaza; a smaller number will need to be looked after in the region; for a very small number, there will be a medical case for them to be treated here. …

Q227 **Alex Ballinger:** … we have also seen recent attacks by the IDF on sites throughout the country, which many of us would agree would be quite destabilising at a time when the Syrian Government are making these positive steps and saying the right things to the international community. Have the UK Government made any representations towards the Israeli Government about these attacks?

Hamish Falconer*:* We are discussing Syria with the Israelis. It is very important that the new Syria is given the best possible chance to be a stable and secure neighbour to all of its neighbours, including Israel. …

Q231 **John Whittingdale:** Finally, Minister, you referred earlier to Iran's malign influence in the region and its involvement in the attacks on Israel, both directly and through proxies. On the one hand, we have been told that Iran has been severely weakened by the destruction in Gaza of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, but at the same time there are reports that Iran has progressed quite rapidly in the acquisition of nuclear weapons, with reports from the International Atomic Energy Authority. How concerned are you about that, and what are we going to do about it?

Hamish Falconer*:* We do not want to see Iran secure a nuclear weapon. That is a priority for us. …

Q232 **John Whittingdale:** Are you confident that it can be achieved through pressure and diplomatic means without resorting to military action?

Hamish Falconer*:* I hope so. …

To read the full transcript see
https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/15512/html/

The statements referred to above by Hamish Falconer can be read at
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/e3-foreign-ministers-statement-on-humanitarian-access-in-gaza
and
https://x.com/HFalconerMP/status/1899370036285850075

Information about the Al Haq case, referred to above by Hamish Falconer, can be read at
https://www.glanlaw.org/israel-weapons-sales

The correspondence between Minister Doughty and the Chair of the Business and Trade Committee, referred to above by Richard Foord can be read at
https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46624/documents/238441/default/
and
https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/46979/documents/242867/default/

The International Court of Justice ruling (Advisory Opinion) referred to above by Alex Ballinger can be read at

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

The Abraham Accords, referred to above by Hamish Falconer and Alex Ballinger, can be read at
https://www.state.gov/the-abraham-accords

Information about the sanctions referred to above by Hamish Falconer can be read at
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-uk-sanctions-target-illegal-outposts-and-organisations-supporting-extremist-israeli-settlers-in-the-west-bank

The Colonna Report, referred to above by Hamish Falconer, can be read at
https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2024/04/unrwa_independent_review_on_neutrality.pdf

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

John McDonnell (Independent) [950] **Royal Television Society and withdrawal of award to journalists in Gaza** – That this House expresses its strong concern at the decision by the Royal Television Society to scrap a special recognition award for journalists in Gaza; further expresses its support for the demand by nearly 400 people, including many prominent journalists, for full transparency about how the Society arrived at this decision; and also expresses its regret that this act by the Society displayed an appalling failure to respect the sacrifices made by journalists in Gaza, including the loss of 170 lives.
https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/63321

House of Commons Library Briefing

Syria after Assad: Consequences and interim authorities 2025
https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10161/CBP-10161.pdf

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Joint statement of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Charlevoix

… Regional peace and stability in the Middle East

We called for the release of all hostages and for the hostages' remains held by Hamas in Gaza to be returned to their loved ones. We reaffirmed our support for the resumption of unhindered humanitarian aid into Gaza and for a permanent ceasefire. We underscored the imperative of a political horizon for the Palestinian people, achieved through a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that meets the legitimate needs and aspirations of both peoples and advances comprehensive Middle East peace, stability and prosperity. We noted serious concern over the growing tensions and hostilities in the West Bank and calls for de-escalation.

We recognized Israel's inherent right to defend itself consistent with international law. We unequivocally condemned Hamas, including for its brutal and unjustified terror attacks on October 7, 2023, and the harm inflicted on the hostages during their captivity and the violation of their dignity through the use of 'handover ceremonies' during their release. We reiterated that Hamas can have no role in Gaza's future and must never again be a threat to Israel. We affirmed our readiness to engage with Arab partners on their proposals to chart a way forward on reconstruction in Gaza and build a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. …

We stressed that Iran is the principal source of regional instability and must never be allowed to develop and acquire a nuclear weapon. We emphasized that Iran must now change course, de-escalate and choose diplomacy. We underscored the threat of Iran's

growing use of arbitrary detention and foreign assassination attempts as a tool of coercion. …

To read the full statement see

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-of-the-g7-foreign-ministers-meeting-in-charlevoix

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ILO Governing Body: UK Statement on the occupied Arab territories

At each Governing Body meeting since the 7th of October, the UK has spoken of the horrors experienced by Palestinians and Israelis. The hostages have endured unimaginable suffering at the hands of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. For the people of Gaza who have lost lives, homes or loved ones, this conflict has been a living nightmare. We need all parties to uphold the ceasefire and ensure it leads to a sustainable peace and the reconstruction of Gaza. …

We remain deeply concerned about the continued, profound impact on the economy across the Occupied Palestinian Territories with GDP decreased by 26% in the OPTs and 82% in Gaza. There are significant job losses, but for those in work, conditions have significantly worsened with low wages, poor safety standards, and lack of social protection. Since 7 October 2023, 200,000 permits for Palestinian workers in Israel have been revoked, further impacting the economy and contributing to rising poverty. We urge the government of Israel to reinstate these permits without delay.

Economic stability is squarely in the interest of both parties. The UK also calls on Israel to fully implement the 1994 Paris Protocol and to reduce barriers to trade, helping the Palestinian private sector to recover.

We also note with concern that the implementation of the Knesset legislation on UNRWA not only risks upending the humanitarian response, but threatens thousands of jobs across the OPT. We urge the government of Israel to work with international partners, including the UN, to ensure continuity of UNRWA's operations; no other entity or UN Agency currently has the capacity or infrastructure to replace their mandate and experience.

Chair, the UK believes that economic development programmes are the key to enabling Palestinians to preserve their economy, encourage private investment and restart economic growth. So, we encourage the international community to continue to provide this. UK support to date includes agricultural productivity, private sector investment and facilitation between Palestinians and Israelis in water, energy, trade. It included £10m in financial aid and Technical Assistance to strengthen the PA's ability to deliver services, maintain stability, and deliver reform. …

To read the full statement see

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/ilo-governing-body-uk-statement-on-the-occupied-arab-territories

The 1994 Paris Protocol, referred to above, can be read at
https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/ParisProtocol_en.pdf

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Foreign Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

No-one should be targeted because of their faith: UK statement at the UN General Assembly

… The United Kingdom celebrates the role of faith in our national life, including the

contributions of our vibrant Muslim communities.
We are committed to building a United Kingdom where all our religious and non-religious communities feel safe and valued and we are dedicated to promoting inclusivity, understanding and respect across our society.
The United Kingdom reiterates its strong commitment to protecting and promoting freedom of religion or belief or "FoRB".
We remain deeply concerned about the severity and scale of FoRB violations and abuses in many parts of the world. …
This commitment includes the work of our recently appointed UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, David Smith MP.
We are clear in our position: the UK unequivocally condemns incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, wherever this occurs and we denounce hatred on the basis of religion or belief.
No-one should be targeted because of their faith.
Like many countries, we have seen an increase in Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hate crime, alongside a rise in antisemitism.
Again, we reiterate our strong position: these incidents have no place in our – or any – society.
The UK is working to address hatred and intolerance at its roots. This year we committed over £1 million to monitor Islamophobia and support victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes.
As part of our work to combat Islamophobia, last month the UK government launched a new working group to provide a definition of anti-Muslim hate and Islamophobia.
This new definition will allow us to better understand, quantify, and tackle anti-Muslim hate crime, while also ensuring that the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to critique religions and religious beliefs, remains protected.
People must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, challenge their governments peacefully, exercise the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and speak out against violations of human rights wherever they occur.
Mr President, we recognise the vital role of interfaith dialogue in supporting communities and combatting intolerance. …
The UK remains committed to promoting mutual respect between different religious and non-religious communities in the UK and globally.
Today is a reminder that we must work individually and collectively with our religious communities and with each other to build understanding and fight against hatred.
To read the full transcript see
https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/no-one-should-be-targeted-because-of-their-faith-uk-statement-at-the-un-general-assembly

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Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Greater efforts needed to address the growing challenge of Anti-Muslim intolerance and hatred, OSCE says

Stronger efforts are required to address and combat intolerance against Muslims as prejudice and violence against Muslims have become serious challenges in an increasing number of countries worldwide, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said in a statement marking today's International Day to Combat Islamophobia. …
"It is our duty to work together to ensure that every individual, regardless of their religion

or belief, can live free from fear, prejudice, and violence. …
It is also critical to acknowledge that intolerance and discrimination against Muslims is not just a matter of individual prejudice but also a structural issue that is perpetuated by state institutions and systems. A normalisation of anti-Muslim rhetoric in politics and media, along with frequently dehumanising language, fosters a climate of hatred and violence. …
Anti-Muslim hate speech on social media has further exacerbated this toxic environment, making online spaces less safe for Muslims and other communities that often find themselves the target of intolerance. At the same time, civil society actors, academics, and institutions are facing verbal and physical attacks, harassment and attempts to silence or defund their efforts to combat intolerance against Muslims.
The Personal Representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, Ambassador Evren Dağdelen Akgün, noted that "anti-Muslim hatred is not only expressed through acts of violence and discrimination but is also embedded in harmful stereotypes and narratives that seek to undermine the dignity of Muslims and their culture." She underlined that "addressing these issues comprehensively and decisively is not only crucial for the well-being of Muslim communities but also essential for fostering peaceful, cohesive and resilient societies at a global level." …
To read the full press release see
https://www.osce.org/chairpersonship/587478

United Nations

Amid Rise in Anti-Muslim Bigotry, Everyone Must Work Together to Uphold Equality, Human Rights, Secretary-General Says in Message for International Day to Combat Islamophobia
… As Muslims around the world come together to mark the holy month of Ramadan, many do so in fear — fear of discrimination, exclusion, and even violence.
We are witnessing a disturbing rise in anti-Muslim bigotry: From racial profiling and discriminatory policies that violate human rights and dignity, to outright violence against individuals and places of worship. This is part of a wider scourge of intolerance, extremist ideologies, and attacks against religious groups and vulnerable populations. When one group is attacked, the rights and freedoms of all are at risk.
As a global community, we must reject and eradicate bigotry. Governments must foster social cohesion and protect religious freedom. Online platforms must curb hate speech and harassment. And we must all speak out against bigotry, xenophobia, and discrimination.
On this International Day to Combat Islamophobia, let us work together to uphold equality, human rights and dignity, and build inclusive societies where everyone, regardless of their faith, can live in peace and harmony.
https://press.un.org/en/2025/sgsm22586.doc.htm

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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

Amendment Paper
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0177/amend/children_day_rep_0317.pdf

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

Amendment Paper
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0187/amend/crime_policing_pbc_rm_0317.pdf

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

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

Second Reading, House of Lords
https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-03-14/debates/DE9808D5-4226-4CFC-8C2A-E543F329064C/PalestineStatehood(Recognition)Bill(HL)

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_0317.pdf

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

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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