

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Commons Written Answer

Legal Systems: Islam

Philip Davies [62936] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Sharia Councils are based in the UK.

Oliver Heald: The information requested can be found on the Parliament website in a letter from Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen dated 12 December 2016 and deposited in the House of Lords Library, regarding the Policing and Crime Bill committee stage debate and Sharia councils (reference DEP2016-0912).

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-02/62936/>

The letter referred to above can be read at

[http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2016-0912/Chisholm letter to Buscombe on the police and crime bill.pdf](http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2016-0912/Chisholm%20letter%20to%20Buscombe%20on%20the%20police%20and%20crime%20bill.pdf)

House of Lords Oral Answers

Religious Literacy

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to combat religious extremism and to promote a cohesive society by enhancing religious literacy at all levels of government.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford): My Lords, the Government are challenging all forms of extremism through our counterextremism and Prevent programmes. We are working closely with faith groups to understand the impact of policies and to improve religious literacy in government. The Home Secretary and the Communities Secretary hosted a round table for representatives of all faiths last November.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon: I thank the noble Baroness for that Answer, but there are still concerns. The Government paper on the hate crime action plan contained no mention of non-Abrahamic faiths. That suggests something about the religious literacy there. Does the Minister agree that democracy implies being attentive to the legitimate concerns of all sections of the community, not those of a single religious or other majority? Does she further agree that teachings and practices that go against human rights must be robustly challenged, but that we need to know something about what we

are challenging before we can do that? Programmes like Prevent cannot be effective without such knowledge. One final point is that I have put the basics of Sikh teachings on one side of A4, and that can be done for other faiths as well. Should that not be essential for religious literacy in government departments?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I missed a little of the noble Lord's question, but I think I have enough to go on. He said that the hate crime action plan did not specifically refer to non-Abrahamic faiths, but the tenets of the action plan cover points on hatred on the basis of religious belief, disability, sexuality and so on. It is therefore implicit within it that, for example, Sikh communities are included. As for the understanding of religious literacy within both government and wider society, both the Home Office and DCLG engage widely and often with faith communities. Shortly after the referendum, I myself met people from different faiths, including Sikhs, in Manchester to discuss religious literacy, the outcome of the referendum and the corresponding hate crime attached to it.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: My Lords, will the Minister confirm that there has been no violence and no torture, and no wars have been waged, in the cause of humanism?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I do not think I can accurately answer that without looking at my history books.

Baroness Warsi: My Lords, can my noble friend tell us whether the Prevent strand of the Government's Contest strategy is part of their counterterrorism strategy or their counterextremism strategy? Can she also say whether there is a religious literacy element to the training given to Prevent co-ordinators? If there is, would she be happy to place a copy in the Library?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: My Lords, the central tenet of the Prevent strategy aims to protect young people who might be vulnerable to both extremism and terrorist preaching either online or in their communities. Actually, it is a protection mechanism, not a targeting mechanism, as I am sure my noble friend will be aware. It is a protective element to help prevent some of the external forces to which our young people are subjected in a negative way prevailing.

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, just three weeks ago I spent half a day in an immigration removal centre and so gained an up-to-date insight into some of the complex and sensitive issues that are being dealt with there. Concerns continue to be raised about the level of religious literacy among some of the asylum caseworkers. Is the Minister content with the level of training that they are getting in religious literacy and, if not, what can be done to improve it?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The right reverend Prelate raises a very important point about the detention estate. Certainly an awful lot of time and effort has gone into the training of staff in terms of the sensitivities around LGBT detainees; in terms of his important point about religious literacy, I will go back and check on just what training is given in that area.

Baroness Hussein-Ece: Does the Minister agree that last weekend's Visit My Mosque initiative, which hundreds—indeed, maybe thousands—took advantage of, was a very good and positive example of promoting greater understanding, community cohesion and tolerance in our society? Does she think that we should have more such initiatives from all faiths to bring people together and establish a more understanding and truthful dialogue?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Baroness raises a really good point about community cohesion. There was a mosque event just near to me last weekend and I had reported back that it was incredibly successful. In fact, the same community holds a summer fair, to which all their neighbours are invited and which is a great initiative—so yes, I would encourage more.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2017-02-09/debates/BD4E79E3-BDC6-4A06-831A-FDDB0990AE27/ReligiousLiteracy>

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Holocaust

House of Commons Debate

Holocaust Memorial Museum

col 749 Edward Leigh: The holocaust is one of the most difficult experiences in our history to commemorate in stone. For its sheer enormity and depravity, it defies adequate description, and transferring this into the built environment is all the more difficult. Architects across the world have attempted to tackle this task—in Israel, Paris, Washington, Ottawa and, perhaps most memorably, in Berlin, with Peter Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

It is impossible sufficiently to convey the horrors of this great crime, but we have a duty to not just commemorate but teach future generations about the holocaust. I will detail why Victoria Tower gardens are insufficient for this task, while pointing out that we have a very good solution available close by, at the Imperial War Museum.

There can be no better example of the twofold task of remembrance and education than the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC ...

On arrival, visitors are given identification cards giving the name and story of a single person, whether a victim or a survivor of the holocaust. On a journey through history, they learn about anti-Semitism, the Nazis' rise to power, the ghettos, discrimination, the frightening "final solution" decided around a conference table in Wannsee, and its implementation in Nazi-occupied Europe. The museum also teaches about the American response to the holocaust. It would be useful to detail Britain's reaction at the time, whether it be to the Kindertransport or the well-intentioned but disastrous decision to severely cap German-Jewish emigration to the British Mandate of Palestine ... Knowledge is vital—indeed, fundamental—to remembrance. We must make sure that Britons know about the holocaust in order to recall this great crime, as well as to prevent future attempts to commit anything remotely similar. ...

... but when we consider the Victoria Tower gardens site we see it is completely unsuited to the role. ... The traffic and access pressure will overwhelm Millbank ... We want people to be able to visit a holocaust memorial museum uninhibited. We want crowds to experience this building, and so it is counter-intuitive to site it at a place that already suffers from congestion and does not have the capacity to deal with the number of people we hope will visit. ...

col 750 The abbey and Palace of Westminster are recognised by UNESCO as a world heritage site, and there is some danger, based on UNESCO's rules and recommendations, that such a large-scale project in Victoria Tower gardens might threaten that designation. ...

Victoria Tower gardens is part of the royal parks, and if we allow a green space like this, even for such an unquestionably useful and justifiable purpose, to be built over, then other spaces under the care of the royal parks may suffer a similar fate. ...

The scale of the learning centre—there has been criticism of it in the architectural press—raises questions about the fate of the existing memorials in the park ... Will these three existing memorials be overshadowed? ...

col 751 Happily, there is a solution. The Imperial War Museum is spending £15 million on renovating and improving its permanent exhibition devoted to educating people about the holocaust. ... The museum's directors have been very welcoming of the idea of having the national holocaust memorial at hand there, and they have offered a site next to the museum. ...

col 752 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Andrew Percy): ... The holocaust may have reached its barbaric climax at Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz-Birkenau, but it started in the hearts of ordinary men and women. We have seen again the madness that can sweep through peoples and nations with the killings in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Such

killings shock our conscience, but they are at the awful extreme of a spectrum of ignorance and intolerance that we see every day—the bigotry that says another person is less than my equal, or less than a human being—and we cannot let those seeds of hate take root in our hearts.

That is why building the memorial is so important to our country. It is also why the new national memorial to the holocaust is to be located next to this place, the heart of democracy and of the values that suffered so terribly during the holocaust and in other events since. ...

col 753 The decision to locate the memorial in Victoria Tower gardens followed an extensive search of more than 50 sites across London, but none was considered more prominent or appropriate than Victoria Tower gardens ...

... careful consideration is being given to the impact of the memorial and the centre on the gardens. ... We envisage hundreds of thousands of people visiting the memorial to reflect, to remember the holocaust and to make use of the important learning centre. Visitors' arrival and exit at the site will be carefully considered and planned in consultation with Royal Parks and local residents. ...

I reiterate the importance of the new national holocaust memorial and learning centre. It will serve as a reminder of the depths of depravity to which a seemingly enlightened society can plunge if it abandons its democratic values, and of the importance of constant vigilance in protecting those values. There could be no more powerful or appropriate location for such a memorial than next to the mother of Parliaments ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-02-09/debates/FCD9FA66-5E6A-4AA2-9EC9-1E44743185AD/HolocaustMemorialMuseum>

[TOP](#)

Israel

House of Commons Debate

Occupied Palestinian Territories: Israeli Settlements

col 673 **Desmond Swayne:** I beg to move, That this House reaffirms its support for the negotiation of a lasting peace between two sovereign states of Israel and Palestine, both of which must be viable and contiguous within secure and internationally recognised borders; calls on the Government to take an active role in facilitating a resumption of international talks to achieve this; welcomes UN Security Council Resolution 2334 adopted on 23 December 2016; and further calls on the government of Israel immediately to halt the planning and construction of residential settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories which is both contrary to international law and undermines the prospects for the contiguity and viability of the state of Palestine.

Given the investment that we have made in a two-state solution, my question to the Minister is: aside from standing on the touchlines watching the players on the field and shouting advice, what more can we do while our friend and ally pursues a policy on settlements that is bound, so proceeding, to deliver a situation in which the two-state solution becomes geographically and economically unworkable? ...

Our Department for International Development employees in Jerusalem, who travel into the city daily on a tortuous commute from the areas around Bethlehem, are young people in their mid-20s to mid-30s. The only interaction that they ever have with an Israeli subject is when, during that journey, they are challenged to show their papers under the operation of what I would call the pass laws that exist to ensure that people's ability to live, stay and work in their own city is restricted.

I entirely understand how we got to that dreadful situation: because of the obscenity of suicide bombing. Israel — no Government — could not possibly tolerate the wholesale

slaughter of its innocent citizens. ... It is one thing to demand, quite properly, face-to-face negotiations, but pursuing a policy in respect of illegal settlements makes those negotiations much more difficult, particularly when that policy is driven by an increasingly strident ideology. ...

col 674 On Monday night, when a Bill was passed in the Knesset retrospectively legalising 4,000 homes in illegal settlements, the Israeli Minister of Culture welcomed the result, saying that it was “the first step towards complete...Israeli sovereignty over Judea and Samaria.” ... it is absolutely clear that a significant proportion of the Israeli political establishment is in thrall to an increasingly strident settler movement that regards Palestine as a biblical theme park—Judea and Samaria. ...It has all the appearance of what we used to describe as petty apartheid.

Secretary Kerry ... said that if the two-state solution were abandoned, Israel could no longer be both a democracy and a Jewish state because, as a consequence of abandoning the policy, it would have to accommodate Palestinian citizens and all their civil and political rights within the state of Israel.

Ian Austin: But did not John Kerry also say that “this is not to say that the settlements are the whole or even primary cause of the conflict—of course they are not. Nor can you say that if they were removed you would have peace without a broader agreement—you would not”? ... The right hon. Gentleman could have tabled a more balanced motion ...

col 675 **William Wragg:** Is now not the time, more than ever, for the United Kingdom Government to be entirely consistent and to remind the world, without any qualification, that settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are illegal?

Desmond Swayne: I absolutely agree. ... I was delighted by the activism of the United Kingdom Government on UN Security Council resolution 2334. ...

I was, of course, dismayed by the subsequent inactivity of Her Majesty’s Government in respect of the Paris conference. ...

What we do—I have heard the Minister say this from the Dispatch Box—is we make representations at the highest level. ... but, so long as they remain representations, the Government of Israel will continue to act with absolute impunity. ...

Israel is our friend and ally. It is a democracy, and a nation in which we have huge commercial interests and with which we share vital intelligence agendas. ... may I make one gentle suggestion to my hon. Friend the Minister? He might consider giving effect to this House’s instruction that we should recognise the Palestinian state. ... he needs to consider this: it would be truly absurd if we were to delay that recognition till after the point at which the reality of any such Palestinian state could actually be delivered.

col 676 **Richard Burden:** ... in my experience there is one thing on which there has always been consensus in the House, whatever people’s views on other issues: the best way to peace between Israel and Palestine is a two-state solution in which both peoples have equal rights to sovereignty in viable and contiguous states. Of course full and lasting peace involves more than dealing with settlements, but settlements are rightly the focus of this debate because their continued expansion, the infrastructure around them, and the demolitions that precede them, are creating, as the right hon. Gentleman said, a new physical reality in the west bank that is destroying the possibility of a viable Palestinian state ever being established. ...

col 677 **Wes Streeting:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the policy of ongoing settlement expansion is not only an intolerable infringement on the rights of the Palestinians, but a long-term threat to the stability and security of Israel? People who care about Israel’s longer-term security, and its future as a democratic and Jewish state, ought to oppose that policy and support the progressive voices in Israel that are also opposed to settlement expansion.

Richard Burden My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am particularly pleased that he mentions the progressive voices in Israel, because they do exist. Among the most insidious things currently happening are the actions taken by some of the Israeli right, sadly supported by people in the Israeli Government, to silence the voices of

organisations such as B'Tselem, Breaking the Silence and many others that have the guts and integrity to stand up and say, "This is wrong."

Some 6,000 new units have been announced in just the past few weeks and the settlement footprints now make up more than 42% of the west bank's land mass. ...

In the past week, we have seen another move towards that, with the passing of the so-called regularisation law, which retrospectively declares legal the illegal Israel settlements on expropriated private Palestinian land....

if there is de facto annexation while Israel maintains a system of laws and controls that discriminate against the majority of people who live in the west bank and denies them basic democratic rights, what term can we use to decide what we are left with but a form of apartheid? ...

Is it any wonder, then, that if one talks to Palestinians today—particularly young Palestinians who have never experienced anything other than the grinding weight of occupation—they increasingly say that they see the international community's constant going on about a two-state solution as a cruel deception for them and their lives? ...

I have two questions for the Minister. First, what actions—not simply words—are the UK Government prepared to take to differentiate settlements in the occupied west bank from Israel itself? Secondly, as settlements are illegal, should not there be a clear message from the Government that ... UK businesses should not collude with illegality through any financial dealings with settlements or through the import of settlement goods to the UK.

... will the Minister agree that, with the two-state solution that we all support under threat like never before, now is the time to act on ... bilateral recognition? ...

col 679 **Crispin Blunt:** ... The argument that resolution 2334, John Kerry's speech, the Paris conference and even this motion are hollow words and simply serve to harden intransigence is transparent, self-serving nonsense. Reiterating basic tenets of international law and ceaselessly searching for peace should not be dismissed in that way.

I share Kerry's analysis that settlements are not the "the whole or even the primary cause of this conflict."

I welcome his work on securing Palestinian acknowledgement that the reference in the Arab peace initiative to the 1967 lines included the concept of land swaps, and he is right that even if the settlements were removed, we would not have peace without a broader agreement.

Since Oslo, Palestinians have been betrayed by two decades of factionalised leadership; by the international community in the disastrous consequences of the implementation of the Oslo process; historically, by their Arab neighbours in the catastrophic way that they first advanced their own interests ahead of the Palestinian cause; and, also historically, by Britain in our failure to deliver the second half of the Balfour declaration.

It is also true that, for more than 100 years, the Palestinian leadership has never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. ... Settlements are illegal under international law for a reason. ...

One cannot conquer someone else's territory and then colonise it. The end of that era was codified in the Geneva convention in 1949, and our experience since has been of decolonisation. That it should have happened over the past 50 years at the hands of a nation born out of the moral authority of the appalling treatment of the Jews in Europe over centuries that culminated in the holocaust is deeply troubling for the admirers of the heroic generation that founded the state of Israel.

We rightly talk about all that should be celebrated in Israel, which is often described as a beacon of our shared values in a troubled region, but the truth is that Palestinians, the Arab world and the wider international community, including our own population, increasingly see Israel through the clouded prism of the settlements.

Within Israel, there is no consensus on settlements. The recent regularisation law has raised a particularly rancorous debate. ...

col 680 It distresses me that, despite the formal reiteration of the British position on

settlements, the recent signals from the Government ... suggest that they do not fully appreciate the seriousness of this obstacle to peace and the threat to the values of a nation that our history of personal, economic and security relationships makes a firm friend and ally. Friends should not allow each other to make profound and damaging mistakes, which is why I support this motion.

Joan Ryan: Before addressing the motion, I wish to condemn the rocket attack on Israel last night when Islamic State fired four rockets from the Sinai peninsula into Eilat. I expect that the whole House wants to join me in that sentiment.

Three weeks ago, I introduced a ten-minute rule Bill in support of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace. At the outset, I made it clear that I opposed continued settlement building in the west bank, a policy that threatens the viability of a future Palestinian state, the case for which is unarguable ...

Settlement building in the west bank does nothing to contribute to raising those levels of trust—in fact, it does quite the reverse—but let us be clear: trust has to be built and earned by both sides. It is unfortunate that today's motion makes scant recognition of that fact. ... Co-existence is building trust.

I do not believe that trust is built when the Palestinian Authority pumps out an unrelenting stream of anti-Semitic incitement—children's programmes that teach their young audience to hate Jews; the naming of schools, sports tournaments and streets after so-called martyrs; and the payment of salaries to convicted terrorists—when it is suggested, as Palestinian state media regularly does, that all of Israel is occupied territory; or when the authority continues to insist on a right to return for the descendants of Palestinian refugees to pre-1967 Israeli territory.

col 681 I do not believe that trust has been built by the experience of Gaza—territory that Israel unilaterally withdrew from 12 years ago only to see it come under the control of Hamas, which is committed to the creation of a Palestinian Islamist state from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean sea. ...

Hamas uses Gaza as a base indiscriminately to fire rockets into Israeli villages, towns and cities ..., and build tunnels to carry out terrorist attacks. ...

Hamas's treatment of women, its political opponents, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and journalists shows absolutely no respect for the basic human rights of the Palestinian people. Trust is not built when those international institutions, which might be expected to help foster a settlement and promote the values of peace and reconciliation, show that they cannot act as honest brokers.

The UN General Assembly ended its 2016 annual legislative session with 20 resolutions against Israel and only six on the rest of the world combined; there were three on Syria, one each on Iran, North Korea and Crimea, and 20 on Israel. There is no balance there. The UN Human Rights Council adopted 135 resolutions in its first decade of existence, 68 of which—more than half—attacked Israel. UNESCO has denied the Jewish people's deep historical connection with Judaism's holiest sites in Jerusalem. ...

we should steer clear of simplistic solutions such as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which, by seeking to delegitimise and demonise the world's only Jewish state, is morally wrong and does nothing to follow the cause it claims to support.

... the greatest contribution Britain can make towards building strong constituencies for peace in Israel and Palestine is to increase our support for co-existence work—people-to-people projects that bring together Israelis and Palestinians at the grassroots level—and to back the establishment of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace. ... Although 59% of Israelis and 51% of Palestinians still support a two-state solution, those already slim majorities are fragile and threatened by fear and distrust between the two peoples. ...

col 682 **Mike Freer:** ... Israeli settlements are not the main obstacle to peace between Israel and the Palestinians by a long stretch. ...

The narrative seems to be that the conflict we see today started in 1967, when Israel gained control of the west bank and Gaza, but I ask hon. Members to consider why

violence in the region pre-dates the existence of the settlements? It is worth recalling that the west bank and Gaza were occupied before 1967 not by Israel, but by Jordan and Egypt respectively. During those occupations, they refused to grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees, nor did they surrender the territory to be used for a Palestinian state. Where is the condemnation of Jordan and Egypt? The international outcry was deferred until Israel occupied the disputed lands, at which point it became unacceptable for an occupation to take place. From that point onwards, it was unacceptable; before that, no condemnation.

Legality is not subjective. It is often said that Israeli settlements are illegal, but stating that repeatedly does not make it true ... The west bank and Gaza remain, as they have always been, disputed territories under international law. There has never been a Palestinian state, so the territory remains ownerless. That is a strong argument for some, although it is not one to which I necessarily subscribe. ...

col 683 Ian Austin: ... The truth is that a Palestinian state was proposed in 1947, but it was not established by other Arab countries, which chose instead to invade Israel at the moment of its establishment. A Palestinian state could have been established at any point in the following 20 years by Egypt, which controlled Gaza at the time, or by Jordan, which controlled the west bank....

Mike Freer: ... Of course, the debate is one-sided. People criticise Israel for demolishing tunnels, building walls and raising buildings, but they make no comment when Egypt does exactly the same. ...

Everyone talks about Israel giving up land for peace. It has given land, but it did not get the peace. ...

I wholeheartedly support and hope for a two-state solution that can be established with trust on both sides, but only two parties can decide on borders and other final status issues, and those two parties are Israel and the Palestinians. ...

UN Security Council resolution 2334 does not help to advance peace, as it focuses on Israeli settlements and only serves to reward Palestinian intransigence and unilateralism. Of particular concern to my constituents is that, for the first time, resolution 2334 defines East Jerusalem as “Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967”, including the Western Wall and Temple Mount, which are Judaism’s holiest sites. The area also includes the holy sites of Christianity, where Jesus practised his ministry. The definition implies that Jews and Christians visiting their holiest sites are acting illegally, and that is an affront to Christians and Jews alike ...

col 684 ... a premature declaration of statehood by the Palestinians, acting unilaterally, would put back peace, not pursue it. If we support the Balfour declaration, we must stand alongside our ally, Israel, and make that declaration work.

Ian Paisley: ... the best way to resolve this apparently intractable problem is the same way as peace processes around the world have resolved problems—through face-to-face negotiations between people on the ground, and not through grandiose schemes that play to certain galleries and certain outside influences. ...

History shows that the unilateral removal and evacuation of settlements did not generate peace at all, but inspired more rocket attacks and the deaths of more innocents in other settlements ... For some—not in this Chamber—it is a cover for more aggression, and for most it reflects a misguided view of what is happening on the ground. You cannot negotiate away settlements in advance. ...

col 685 Israel has a very good track record of agreeing concessions on territory whenever peace is made. That was the history in 1979 between Sadat and Begin. When they made an agreement, what did Israel do? It gave up critical Sinai—91% of the territory it won in 1967—once peace was agreed. As part of that peace, Begin completely destroyed the Yamit settlement in Sinai. ...

I have been part of a peace process, and you cannot make a major concession at the beginning of a peace process and think that it starts at that point; you make the concessions at the end, on the basis of an agreement. That is what needs to take place.

Rushanara Ali: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he agrees that Israeli settlements are illegal? ... Secondly, in relation to Gaza, 800,000 children are living in what the former Prime Minister described as one of the world's biggest open prisons. ...

Ian Paisley: ... I have absolute sympathy, concern and passion for the needs of Israeli and Palestinian children, men and women. ... The message we should send out today is clear and unequivocal: only Israelis and Palestinians, sitting down together face to face, can sort this out and achieve peace in a much tortured and embattled region.

col 686 **Tania Mathias:** ... If someone criticises Palestine, it does not mean they are an apologist for the occupation. If someone criticises Israeli policies, it does not mean they are against Israel or anti-Semitic. I deplore Hamas's support for terrorism, and I deplore the building of settlements and outposts beyond the green line. ...

This is a very important debate, especially in this year of sad anniversaries—anniversaries of occupation, anniversaries of a blockade and, vitally for us and for our Government today, the centenary of the Balfour declaration. The declaration did commend the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) said, it also uses the words: "it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine". That is where our role is critical.

It is correct that the settlements are illegal. ...

Worryingly, the number of settlements has increased to over 100, as has the number of outposts, to over 100. They are increasing in number, in population, and in geographical area. A matter of concern for anybody who has seen images of them are the settlements in the area just by Jerusalem, the so-called E1 area, which may split the Palestinian west bank north and south. Gaza and the west bank have been separate since 1947, yet this year there is the danger of even more fragmentation.

Bob Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that the regularisation law passed by the Israeli Government last Monday makes a two-state solution even more difficult, because settlements that previously were illegal are now legal under Israeli law?

col 687 **Tania Mathias:** I absolutely agree. ... I completely agree with other Members who have talked about trust and communities coming together. ...

I have been in the region during a period of conflict and witnessed many events, but the only time I saw an Uzi being fired at a school was by a settler, not by any person in military uniform.

... even if all the settlements and outposts were dismantled today, there would not be peace, because the negotiations have to proceed about matters such as borders, Jerusalem, the refugees' right to return, and Israeli bases.

Ian Austin: I oppose anything that stands in the way of the creation of the two-state solution that I have believed in and campaigned for all my life. It is wrong, however, to suggest, as I believe this motion does, that the settlements are the only barrier, or even the biggest barrier, to the peace process. We have to look at the actions of the Palestinian Authority, too: the denial of Israel's right to exist; the depiction of all of modern Israel as part of Palestine; the incitement to, and glorification of, violence by its media, senior officials and Ministry of Education.

... the incentivising of terrorism through the payment of salaries to convicted terrorists. ...

Does anyone seriously believe that the settlements are a bigger barrier to the peace process than Hamas's terrorism and extremism? Its charter sets out its goals with an explicit rejection of not just Israel's right to exist, but the very idea of a peace process, which it says would involve the surrender of "Islamic land". This is an organisation that spends millions, and uses building materials, which could build hospitals, schools and homes, for tunnels and terror. It pioneered suicide bombing in the middle east, and then celebrated the murder of Israelis in bars and restaurants. ...

I do not defend settlement-building, but the House should recognise that Israel has shown its willingness to evacuate settlements before—from Sinai in 1982, as part of the Camp David accords, and when it unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

col 688 **John Howell:** Will the hon. Gentleman congratulate Israel, because only last month it removed 50 families from land at Amona?

Ian Austin: ...I am pleased that it has been raised because it has not been discussed or mentioned by anyone who has spoken so far.

It is important for the House to recognise that 75% of the settlers are on 6.3% of the land, so when people talk about the west bank being concreted over, they are factually wrong—it is not true. ...

This issue can be dealt with through land swaps. That was accepted as a principle for building a peace process in all recent negotiations. ...

There are considerable further challenges facing a two-state solution, such as the status of Jerusalem, security, and refugees. However, it is also important to recognise, as has not been sufficiently recognised in this debate so far, that majorities on both sides still favour a two-state solution. None of these issues is insurmountable if there is a willingness on both sides to negotiate, to compromise, and to make concessions. ...

We should be doing everything we can to develop dialogue, to promote direct negotiations between the two sides, and to build trust instead of boycotts, sanctions and other measures that just drive people further and further apart. I want Britain to support organisations like the one we heard about earlier, ..., that bring Israelis and Palestinians together to work to build the foundations for two viable states living peacefully alongside each other. ... I want Britain to be doing more to promote economic development, trade and investment on the west bank, encouraging brilliant projects like one that I have been to see—the new Palestinian city of Rawabi on the west bank. I want to see Britain pushing internationally for the demilitarisation and reconstruction of Gaza.

col 689 Peace talks have produced results in the past, they have come close to a breakthrough on several occasions since, and they will have to do so again, because the only way this conflict will be resolved is by people on both sides negotiating, compromising, and working together towards the two-state solution.

John Howell: ... I have on several occasions been to Tel Aviv to see Save a Child's Heart, a brilliant organisation that goes out of its way to treat Palestinian children who have heart problems. That involves fine surgery that requires a great deal of skill. ...

The number of Arab children treated by the Israeli doctors at the hospital is phenomenal, and it sets a brilliant example for the whole region.

Ian Austin: ... We hear a binary, simplistic, polarised debate, when the truth about Israel and Palestine is that people on the ground are working together, co-operating, talking and building the peace process that we all want to see. ...

col 690 **John Howell:** ... here we have a wonderful example of co-operation between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and yet we are focusing on one issue—settlements. ...

Settlements are one of the five final status issues, which also include borders, the status of Jerusalem, security and Palestinian sovereignty. ...

I spoke to Anwar Sadat, the leader of the Reform and Development party in Egypt, and he said, "We are not going to sort out the problems of Gaza until terrorism in Egypt stops." That was his message for the area. Settlements in East Jerusalem, for example, account for 1% of the territory.

... Direct peace talks are required between Israel and the Palestinians, without preconditions. Unfortunately, the Palestinian side comes up with preconditions every time, and those preconditions usually involve the release of yet more terrorists. ...

At the moment, all that Israel has got out of the process is a denial of its right to exist, an intensification of violence and demands for the release of yet more terrorists. I do not think anyone should ignore the fact that that is happening because the Palestinians are scared of their own elections. Polling suggests that they are going to lose, whether we are talking about the Palestinian Authority or Hamas, and, sadly, they are going to be succeeded by organisations that are in favour of ISIS.

col 691 **Simon Danczuk:** ... How can Palestinians take a peace offer seriously when settlements continue to be built? How can Palestinians trust Israel to recognise a

Palestinian state when their homes are being demolished? How can Palestinians believe in a genuine two-state solution based on the 1967 borders when Israel continues its encirclement of East Jerusalem? The settlements must stop in order to give any framework for peace a chance, and Britain must be at the forefront of that effort. Britain has a moral responsibility to the Palestinian people, given our role in the region and our betrayal of the people who lived under our mandate after the first world war.

... Trump has made potentially inflammatory remarks about moving the US embassy to Jerusalem, and he has selected a pro-settlement real estate lawyer to be the US ambassador to Israel. That has so emboldened the Israeli right that within days of the Trump inauguration, the Israeli Government announced their plans to build a further 2,500 housing units in the west bank.

Helen Goodman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that to make it clear to the Israelis how unsatisfactory the situation is, we should adopt the same policy as we have adopted towards the Russians over their invasion of Crimea and introduce personal sanctions on those who promote and benefit from the settlements?

Simon Danczuk: ... I have to agree that there needs to be some consistency in British foreign relations regarding our attitude towards different countries.

... I am sure many benefits can be gained from the new UK-Israel trade working group, but will the Minister assure me and my colleagues that the UK's opposition to the new settlements in the west bank will be made forcefully? What is more, will he assure us that increased trade with Israel will not benefit those making a living out of the illegal occupation? ...

col 692 **Bob Blackman:** ... The motion before us is a curate's egg—good in parts. At its heart, there is a false assertion. ... To call it occupied territory is of course to suggest that a country once existed, but it has never existed. That is the real dilemma in this whole problem.

I absolutely think that United Nations Security Council resolution 2334 should not have been supported by the United Kingdom Government; ... I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on distancing herself from John Kerry's one-sided speech. ...

I want to ask the Minister about one particular issue. What is his view of the Oslo accords and the agreements that the Palestinians made with the Israeli Government? Under those agreements, it was quite clear that developments could take place in area C of the west bank—that was permitted and agreed to by the Palestinians—so to call this illegal is incorrect.

Equally, we have heard that United Nations resolution 2334 would prevent Jews and Christians from celebrating at the western wall and at the greatest Christian sites. Before 1967, the western wall was out of bounds to Jews, and the same thing would happen again were this implemented. ...

I want to talk about something that has not been mentioned thus far: the plight of the 2.3 million Jewish refugees who were forced out of Arab countries and had to flee for their lives. Some of them went to Israel, some to the United States and others to parts of Europe. They are never mentioned, but there clearly has to be a home for them. ...

My concern, and that of many hon. Members, is that the Palestinians are trying to internationalise the issue—taking their case to the United Nations, and seeking help and assistance from outside—but are not getting the real issue, which is the need for face-to-face talks with the state of Israel to resolve the existing problems so that we can reach a conclusion with a secure state of Israel and a secure state of Palestine. We should always remember that the green line represents an area that would be indefensible for the state of Israel in the event of another war.

Joan Ryan ... Does he agree that in the process of trying to internationalise the process, rather than accepting that there have to be direct, face-to-face talks, the Palestinians are being misled into believing that peace can be found for them without their having to make any compromise? ...

Bob Blackman: ... The reality is that the Jordanians did not build trust among the

Palestinians at that time; they refused to give them status or title to their land. ... we must build trust through joint projects and by bringing people together so that there can be negotiation, with trust being built between the peoples, rather than their being separated. It is quite clear that everyone would like the security barrier around Jerusalem to be removed, but it can be removed only when there is trust between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Once that is in place, we can achieve the dream of a two-state solution, with proper viable borders and proper security for both states.

col 694 Louise Ellman: It is extremely important that we recognise and reaffirm the importance of two states—Israel and Palestine—in resolving this tragic conflict between two peoples who are both legitimately seeking self-determination. Together with that, there must be a very clear understanding from the Palestinians that Israel, as a majority Jewish state, is there to stay as part of the middle east, and is not, as they too often suggest, an imposition from outside the area.

The origins of the settler movement, which I do not support, are not often known or understood. In 1967, Israel survived a defensive war, and then found that it was ruling Gaza, which had previously been under the control of Egypt, and the west bank, which had previously been under the control of Jordan. ... It is tragic that the Arab League Khartoum conference held in 1967 stridently declared to Israel: no peace, no recognition, no negotiation. That gave the green light to the settler movement that followed.

Ian Austin: ... comparisons between Israel and Russia are utterly fatuous. In 1967, Israel was invaded, but it managed to deal with the invasion. That was when the west bank and Gaza came under Israel's control. ...

Mrs Ellman: ... In Sinai in 1979, in an agreement with Egypt that survives to this day, Israel withdrew not just from Sinai but from its settlements there. Israel unilaterally withdrew 8,000 settlers and soldiers from Gaza in 2005. It demolished its settlements and, tragically, that has not led to peace. In every attempt to make peace—there have been a number in recent years—with Palestinians and others, a solution has been found to settlements, whether that means land swaps or settlements becoming part of a Palestinian state.

Crispin Blunt: ... The key issue is that the settlements on the west bank are changing the physical geography. ... The scale of the challenge on the west bank is that there are 400,000 rather than just 8,000 settlements. Therefore, ... it becomes more difficult every day for Israel to deliver an agreement as the settler interest becomes greater.

Mrs Ellman: I agree that the settlement policy is certainly not helpful, but it has developed because of the intransigence of the Palestinians and a failure to reach agreement. ...

One critical problem and barrier to resolving the situation is the deliberate incitement by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. Hamas is explicitly anti-Semitic—it has talked about Jews ruling the world and made a statement about killing every Jew behind a rock—but the Palestinian Authority is not totally innocent either.

I draw hon. Members' attention to the Palestinian campaign of incitement to violence and individual terrorism. In the 12 months after October 2015—it is not finished yet—there were 169 stabbings, 128 shootings and 54 car rammings. Forty-six Israeli civilians were killed and more than 650 were injured on the streets of Israel. ...

The Palestinian Authority has taken actions such as naming schools after terrorists. ...

I remind hon. Members that, just last month, President Abbas's party honoured the martyrdom of Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian female suicide bomber, who in 2002 used her cover as a volunteer for the Palestinian Red Crescent to enter Jerusalem in an ambulance. ...

I ask all hon. Members to consider the role of incitement and the stirring up of hatred in creating a massive barrier to peace. The solution is for both peoples—Israelis and Palestinians—to sit together in direct talks and agree a compromise and a negotiated agreement, so that there is a secure Israel and a secure Palestine, and a homeland for Israelis, Jews and Palestinians.

col 696 **Philip Hollobone:** ... She is right about the disgusting incitement from the Palestinian side. On the other side, however, some of the language and behaviour of extremist Jewish settlers, particularly in places such as Hebron, is equally vile. We will never find a resolution to the conflict unless we deal with both sides of the argument. ...

Dr Mathias; Does my hon. Friend agree that it is extraordinary that, even during all the conflicts and intifadas, the British cemeteries in Gaza have been well maintained?

Mr Hollobone: Yes, and the elderly gentleman who maintains the Commonwealth war graves in Gaza City was awarded the MBE, of which he was extraordinarily proud. ...

For the best part of 30 years after the first world war, we did our best to try to come to a reconciled solution between Arabs and Jews. As a nation we failed, which was why we pulled out in 1948. We will not solve the problem of Israel and the Palestinians this afternoon. ...

I support Her Majesty's Government's opposition to Israeli settlements. ...

What more are Her Majesty's Government going to do to let the Israeli Government know that we are opposed to settlements—and that we mean it? What more will we do apart from just shouting from the touchline?

Ian Austin: What evidence is there that sanctions and boycotts, which drive people further apart, will achieve anything? Surely we should be arguing for trade and investment with the west bank—

col 697 **Mr Hollobone:** I am not in favour of boycotts or divestment, whatever the issue. I am in favour of Her Majesty's Government having a robust method of action against the Israeli Government to ensure that they are clear about our policy. I voted for the recognition of Palestine and would do the same every day of the week. I am also a friend of Israel, which is a fantastic country that has brought many benefits to the world. We have heard about Save a Child's Heart and the work that Israeli surgeons are doing to help vulnerable children from all nations around the world, including Muslim nations. Israel is a leader in the hi-tech industry and in medicine—many NHS medicines come from Israel—and a key ally in very rough and dangerous part of the world. But our friend and ally Israel now finds itself in the 50th year of a military occupation of 2.5 million people. Speaking as a candid friend, surely it is our duty to say to Israel, "You cannot go on like this." ...

Clearly, we will ultimately have to end up with bilateral talks, but it is wrong to say that international talks are a diversion. The state of Israel was established as a result of international action through the United Nations. We have to be realistic. As friends of both the Israelis and the Palestinians, we have to say, "For goodness sake, how long does this have to go on?" Nowhere in the history of the world has there been 50 years of military occupation. ...

Her Majesty's Government, in the 100th year of the Balfour declaration, have a bigger role to play than they might realise. They should seize this opportunity to knock heads together and say, "How can Britain help you two, our friends, to come together?"

col 698 **Clive Betts:** ... It is clear that the settlements are in breach of international law. The International Court of Justice and the UN resolution in December last year found that to be the case. ... No one is saying that they are the only barrier to peace, but they are a barrier. ...

The Israelis say they want talks to begin without preconditions, but they do not. They want the precondition that they can carry on building settlements while negotiations take place. ...

The problem with the settlements being a barrier—this point has just been made—is that they fragment the land that Palestine will form as a state. ...

There cannot be a peace agreement when one side does not recognise international law. That goes without saying.

The impact of the settlements on the economy of Palestine has to be understood. ...

Look at the racism. I am sorry, but it is racism when, because of their race, people are treated differently on whether they can build on a piece of land, get through a checkpoint

easily or have to go to a different checkpoint, or, most fundamentally, have access to water. ...

The Government supported the UN resolution in December. What will they now do to implement it?

col 699 **Tommy Sheppard:** This is the longest-running conflict in the modern era and its solution seems further away than ever, but its very intractability is a reason why we should rededicate ourselves to trying to move the process forward. ...

There are two fundamental truths for people who believe in the two-state solution. First, one state exists and one state does not. Trying to create and bring into existence the state of Palestine is therefore the world's unfinished business, and we should support that. Secondly, there cannot be a two-state solution while one state is in military occupation of the lands designated for the other. At some stage, the occupation will have to end if there is to be a two-state solution. ...

People thought that by the end of the century that land and that responsibility would transfer to the Palestinian Authority as it emerged and became a fully-fledged Palestinian state. Not only has that not happened, but the actions of the Israeli Government since have made it even further away than it was then 25 years ago.

Dr Monaghan: Does my hon. Friend agree there is an enormous power imbalance between Israel, a state with the fourth-largest and strongest army in the world, and Palestine, which is not a state and does not have an army? Palestinians have already conceded 78% of their land. International pressure is needed now. Ignoring UN resolution 2334 is not the way forward.

Tommy Sheppard: I agree, which is why the people who talk about face-to-face talks really ought to consider that this is a David and Goliath situation. In any conflict where that situation has existed and peace has been achieved, it has been with international support and an international framework. It was true with the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, too. ...

There will need to be land swaps. Some settlers may wish to be Palestinian citizens and some may wish to take advantage of relocation schemes to go into Israel proper, but the issue will have to be dealt with. ...

col 700 **Imran Hussain:** I put on record my support for UN resolution 2334, which calls for peace, denounces violence in all its forms and crucially, condemns the building of illegal settlements by the Israeli Government. ...

Surprisingly, one or two Members have cast doubt on whether the settlements are illegal. The position is very clear. For the sake of clarity, let me cite the view of some authorities. The settlements have been declared illegal under international law by numerous UN resolutions, the Geneva convention, the International Court of Justice, the US State Department, the Rome statute, article 2 of the UN charter, the Hague regulations and, most importantly, by this House and Ministers of all parties. ...

A two-state solution is the only viable option for peace in the region, but if we continue to see Palestinian land disappear under illegal settlements, the two-state solution will be dead and with it the hopes of peace for Palestinians and Israelis alike. ...

What is paramount for peace in the region is peace between Israel and Palestine. That is what I want to see, as I hope we all do, but illegal settlements have to stop before we can reach that point or even get back on the path to it. ...

col 701 **Naz Shah:** ... [I] commend the Government on signing UN resolution 2334 last December. As the Palestinians have done since 1993, I recognise and accept a two-state solution and Israel's existence. However, the last two weeks has seen that vision placed at greater risk by the acts of the Israeli Government—a democracy that does not live up to the values that it espouses. The passing of the regulation law, which even the hard-right MP, Benny Begin, described as the “robbery law” flies in the face of the resolution and international efforts for peace. ...

We have tolerated Israel changing the physical reality on the ground. We must never tolerate any attempt to change the legal position. ...

It is a travesty for a Government to legislate in a land that is not under the rule of their Parliament, where the people of that land have no representation.

... Celebrating Amona is disheartening. Israel was just abiding by the law—it was asked to remove occupants from Amona, and that was not to be celebrated.

col 702 **Andy Slaughter:** ... First, the tragedy of Palestine is the occupation. The length of the occupation and the fact that it has happened are what distinguishes this from many other conflicts around the world. The settlements are the embodiment of occupation. Everything else that is wrong in the occupied territories flows from those settlements; 85% of the barrier, which is there to protect the settlements, is in occupied territory. It has been said that settlements occupy only 1.5% of the land, but they control 42.7% of the land. ...

Secondly, we are at a crucial point, with 6,000 new settler units having been declared since Donald Trump went into the White House. ...

Why can we not stop trading with illegal settlements? It would not be a boycott—let us not confuse one for the other. Why can we not ensure clearer guidelines for businesses to stop them doing that? Why can we not prevent financial transactions, as was done with Crimea, and why can we not have a database, as the UN asked for, in respect to all those issues? ...

col 704 **Mark Hendrick:** ... Some hon. Members have sought to trivialise the issue of settlements, but while they might not be the most important issue, they are nevertheless very important. We need only look at UN resolutions 242 and 338, dated 1967 and 1973, in which the key phrase refers to the: “Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict”.

It is clear that the Israeli armed forces will not be withdrawn as long as settlements exist in the west bank, so it goes without saying that settlements embody a crucial part of the problem. ... So much land will have been taken that there will be very little left for a contiguous state, as I hope the Government will recognise. ...

It is said that there should be no preconditions before talks, but clearly the UN resolutions are not preconditions; they refer to international law, so the discussions and direct talks should take place on that basis. I urge the Government to recognise Palestine and apply pressure on the US and elsewhere to ensure that a two-state solution is still viable.

Alan Brown: As others have reflected, settlements are illegal under international law and a physical barrier to the peace process, as well as a metaphorical barrier. ...

Forced movement of people is illegal. It is sometimes dressed up as moving people on so that they might enjoy a better lifestyle, but we have seen examples of that in history and it is a false premise. We saw it with the native Americans and Scottish highlanders.

col 705 ... Israel has acted with impunity over demolitions because the international community has not acted. The UK and the EU have never asked for redress for demolitions, and it is time that that changed, given that 180 structures, partly funded by the EU, and therefore the UK, have been demolished, but there has been no redress. ...

Louise Haigh: ... As we move into the centenary year of the Balfour declaration, it is chilling to see the President of the United States openly promote those with hideous anti-Semitic views or in France to watch the rise of a presidential candidate whose party has for decades traded in the despicable sewers of anti-Jewish sentiment. That makes it all the more important for us in Britain to uphold our principles, and to speak out in a clear voice when our allies threaten them. ...

As the United Nations Human Rights Council found, while fenced areas of settlements cover only 3% of the west bank, in reality 43% of the territory is allocated to local and regional settlement councils. If that control is legalised, legitimised and expanded, it represents one of the most grievous blows to the prospects for peace for decades. It was therefore astonishing when our Prime Minister chose to use a balanced speech by the outgoing United States Secretary of State to signal a divergence from the position of our closest ally. ...

I have no doubt that that criticism, and the warm embrace of a new President in the

United States who is determined to support existing settlements, emboldened the Israeli Government, who have announced, for the first time in decades, thousands of new buildings in the occupied territories. ...

col 706 There can rarely have been a time in the post-war world when our moral voice has been quite so weak. I urge the Government not to jettison our historic role and credibility as a partner of peace for the sake of a quick trade deal. I urge the Minister to do what the Prime Minister could not, and condemn the land regularisation legislation that seeks to legitimise the illegitimate and will do untold damage in the long search for peace.

Jim Fitzpatrick: ... I have received nearly 100 emails from constituents asking me to support the debate. ...

Like other Members who have spoken, I want to see a two-state solution, but that seems more remote than ever. ... As has been said by the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) and others, face-to-face talks are the only way forward.

Settlement building by the Israeli Government seems totally contrary to any peace process. Briefing circulated by the Britain-Palestine all-party parliamentary group, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden), states: "The influx of settlers into the West Bank and East Jerusalem significantly increases tension in the region". ...

However, I recognise the provocation, and it is important to emphasise that that provocation is not one-sided.

As has been said, 2017 is a very significant year historically. It is the anniversary of the Balfour declaration, the UN partition and the 1967 war, among other events. Is it too much to hope that history will bear down on those involved to restart talks?...

col 707 **Dr Rupa Huq:** At a time when we are seeing rising anti-Semitism in Europe and rising hate crime, even in this country, post-Brexit, this debate should not be an excuse for Israel-bashing—or, indeed, the demonising of all Palestinians as terrorists. Israel is arguably a small country surrounded by inhospitable neighbours and some of the most lethal terrorist groups on earth. Its people should obviously live in peace and security, free from the fear of rocket attacks, ...

My interest in speaking in the debate—I am making my declaration on the spot!—was spurred on by the fact that last month I had been part of a cross-party delegation to the Holy Land, ... It was an eye-opening experience: I had seen nothing like this before.

col 708 While we were there, there were calls for the pardoning of an Israeli soldier who had shot an injured Palestinian teenager in the head. When we got back, we saw on the news—

Lyn Brown: ... According to the United Nations, a quarter of households in the occupied territories have insecure access to food, and an estimated 1 million are in need of health and nutrition assistance. ...

The Government have confirmed that in the past year, 1,010 Palestinian homes and other buildings have been destroyed, dismantled or confiscated in area C and east Jerusalem—the highest figure in east Jerusalem since 2000—leaving 1,476 people, including 696 children, displaced and vulnerable. ...

This disregard for human rights does not just apply in Gaza and the west bank. Recently, I asked a series of parliamentary questions about the Bedouin communities in Israel, and in particular the village of Umm al-Hiran near Hura. ...

Does the Minister think that Israel's recent acceleration of its illegal settlement policies is in any way linked to the change of US President? ...

col 709 **Stephen Kinnock:** ... Just as the Israeli Prime Minister was flying back after his visit here, the Knesset was passing the so-called regularisation Bill. This Bill retroactively legalises over 50 illegal settlement outposts, 3,850 housing units and the expropriation of almost 2,000 acres of private Palestinian lands. In short, it legalises the illegal. ...

This debate is not about being pro-Israel or pro-Palestine; it is about standing up for the values and norms that we hold dear. It is about upholding the rule of law and not shirking

our responsibilities. ...

The continued expansion of illegal settlements does not just hurt the Palestinian people; it hurts Israel as well, because there can be no security for Israel without peace, and there can be no peace as long as there are illegal settlements. ...

col 710 Britain, as a key strategic ally, partner and friend of Israel, should be stepping up as a critical friend. That means ending direct support for settlements.

We should, in line with the UK guidelines, prohibit trade with companies and financial institutions complicit in the settlements and prohibit dealings with charities involved in illegal settlement projects. ...

Seema Malhotra: ... I believe fundamentally in the two-state solution and also that we as an international community must support progressives in Israel as well as Palestine in efforts to secure long-term peace. However, we know that Israeli settlements are illegal and contrary to international law—and, indeed, that they undermine prospects for the viability of the state of Palestine. Settlements are a barrier to trust, and they are a barrier to peace.

I want to make two brief points today: first, the need for renewed international talks and the need to focus on the issue of children and education in Palestine; and, secondly, to recognise the contribution of associations such as the Britain-Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network here, and also those in the middle east, that do vital work. ...

col 711 What will the Government do to strengthen their advice to British businesses about avoiding engaging with other businesses that support settlements, so we do everything we can to stop settlements and the illegal enterprise that comes from them?

John Nicolson: ... I have been visiting those countries since the first Gulf war. Back then, Palestinian democrats warned of the rise of the fundamentalist Hamas. They argued that if Israel failed to support an independent Palestinian state, extremism would rise, the centre ground would be lost, and peace would be harder to attain. ...

People come from across the world to live in Israel, and for lots of reasons, but those seeking a better life in the illegal settlements gain it, alas, by the appropriation of Palestinian land and homes. Palestinian farmland is barren and dry, yet many settlements have swimming pools with illegally funnelled water. ... If a viable two-state solution dies and Palestine is subsumed into a greater Israel stretching from the Mediterranean to the Dead sea, what will happen to the 5 million to 6 million Palestinians in the Jewish state with no government of their own? ...

It was Edward Said who put it best for me. “Can you explain to me,” he asked, “why because of the evil committed against innocents in Europe 60 years ago, you in the west salve your consciences by turning a blind eye to the injustice of my family’s expulsion from our home to provide compensation for people in whose oppression we played no part?” This goes to heart of the issue. We cannot turn a blind eye to this theft any longer. We cannot allow the bitterness to pass to another generation.

col 712 **Ruth Cadbury:** ... Every Palestinian we met—Palestinian Authority members, elected city leaders, political activists and young people—subscribed to the two-state solution and wanted help in ensuring that it is achieved. I saw, as did other colleagues, the settlements marching across the hills over expropriated land, usually illegally. ... if we want to address stone throwing and other violence by Palestinian children, we need only to look at the daily incidents of brutalisation to which they and their families have been subjected for decades. ...

The Palestinians living there are not citizens of Israel and do not have the right to vote, but the Israelis living there do. Israeli civil law applies to settlers, affording them all sorts of legal protections, rights and benefits not enjoyed by their Palestinian neighbours, who are subject to Israeli military law. Palestinians should not be made to go through the indignity of negotiating over territory that should be theirs in a future state. This should be an international negotiation in which our Government should play a major part.

col 713 **Joanna Cherry:** ... The international community considers the establishment of settlements in the Israeli-occupied territories illegal under international law because the

fourth Geneva convention prohibits countries from moving people into territories occupied in a war. That is a legal fact. I am aware that the state of Israel maintains that the settlements are consistent with international law because it does not agree that the fourth Geneva convention applies. However, the weight of international opinion is against it. ...

Israel is good on LGBT rights, but the point of human rights is that they are universal. Palestinians have the same rights as Israelis under international law—or at least they should have, but they do not at present. No matter how important it is to have a state of Israel—it is important—and no matter how much of a good friend Israel might be to the United Kingdom, it is imperative that we, as democrats and people who believe in the rule of law, speak the truth and do not let the Israeli Government get away with distortion and alternative facts when it comes to the rule of law. ...

First, will the Minister give us a timetable for the United Kingdom's recognition of the state of Palestine? Secondly, what will the British Government do to support the groups within the state of Israel that are striving to achieve peace?

Tom Brake: The settlements are illegal—that must be central to any talks. Several Members have suggested that direct negotiations should take place, but I question whether that is feasible. There is no trust whatsoever between the two parties, and the talks would be unequal, which is something that the Israelis acknowledge as they hold many of the trump cards. ...

col 714 The Liberal Democrats, of course, support a two-state solution, and we believe that part of the way in which it will be achieved is through international co-operation such as the Paris conference. ... We want the Palestinians to clamp down on violence and its glorification, but the Israelis must also act unilaterally. ...

The land regularisation Bill is a good example of a counter-productive initiative, as is the expansion in area C. ...

It is clear that while the illegal settlements and their expansion are not the only obstacle to the peace process, every expansion and every attempt to legitimise their illegality is rightly seen as a slap in the face for the Palestinians and a demonstration of bad faith by the Israeli Government. Of course, any instance of Palestinian-initiated violence against Israel is clearly also seen as a demonstration of bad faith. The fact is that each illegal settlement expansion strengthens Israel's hand and makes a two-state solution, which many senior Israeli politicians clearly dismiss, increasingly impossible.

Ministers say that Palestinian recognition will be appropriate at a time when it will have most impact. That time is now. If Ministers wait any longer, Palestinian recognition will be pointless, as a one-state solution will have been imposed.

Dr Philippa Whitford: ... I echo the comment by the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) about Israeli doctors treating people from all communities. That is true, but often we could not get patients to Israeli doctors in Hadassah hospital because of curfews. ...

col 715 Some 1.8 million people live in the tiny strip of Gaza. It is becoming unviable. It is pouring sewage into the sea and the water is undrinkable. It will be unviable by the mid-2020s. The west bank is being put in the same situation by the expansion of settlements. It is not just the settlements, but the walls that separate people from their farmland or sources of water. ...

What is the vision for the outcome that even the Israeli Government want? The only thing we have is international law, and if we do not stick to that, we will have no position of right for other people who do the wrong thing. ...

Everyone has said that they believe in a two-state solution, so how bizarre is it that we recognise only one of those states? If we do not take action to avoid profit from settlements and annexation by concrete, we will be answerable.

Margaret Ferrier: As joint vice chair of the all-party group on human rights, I approach today's debates with human rights at the forefront of my mind. My party supports the EU position of a two-state solution and encourages Israel and Palestine to reach a sustainable negotiated settlement under international law. There can be no justification

for any impediment to progress in a peace process, such as indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel or the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied territories. ...
col 716 The illegal settlements critically interfere with the ability of the Palestinian people to exercise their fundamental right to self-determination, and it is not just the settlements. The associated infrastructure built on expropriated Palestinian land also has a substantial impact. ...

The time is right for the UK to recognise Palestine and its right to self-determination. The UK has not only a moral duty but a legal duty not to recognise, aid or assist Israel's illegal settlements and associated infrastructure because they impede Palestinians in exercising their fundamental right to self-determination. ...

Jim Shannon: I am well known as a friend of Israel, and the premise of a friend is that they are honest, open and truthful. With that in mind, there must be fairness for all, and I fear that UNSCR 2334 adversely affects the Jewish right to fairness. ...

Appeasement cannot be the answer for Israel and Palestine; working together is the only answer, and that is hard to do in the current situation. ...

Much like the situation in Northern Ireland, some people see negotiation as demanding things their way or no way, and that if their demands are not granted, they will go back to violence.

I have a very real fear that we are pushing Israel into a place where it does not want to be and where we do not want it to be. ... There is no doubt in my mind that the Jews have a historical right, and we should play a role that helps the process, saves lives and that perhaps allows children to grow up without distrusting other people.

I fully understand the concern that the UNESCO vote seems to disregard Jewish heritage in Jerusalem, and we seem to be going through a similar issue in relation to Northern Ireland's history. We want peace in the middle east, but it must be fair. There can never be peace without recognising that the Wailing Wall and the Temple Mount are Jewish holy sites that predate other sites. The Israelis have a right to access those places, and access must underpin the negotiations, not the presumption that the Jews are the ones to blame. The Jews want to live in peace on their own historical land. The motion in no way recognises that, which is why I cannot support it.

col 717 There can be peace in the middle east, but only through encouragement, not division. Let us start by sending the right message: Israel is a friend of this nation and we will do the right thing by it.

Patrick Grady: ... The Scottish Government and the Scottish National party position has firmly and consistently been that peace in the region depends on there being two secure, stable and prosperous states of Israel and Palestine, living side by side. Israel and Palestine should be encouraged to reach a sustainable negotiated settlement, under international law, that has as its foundation mutual recognition and a determination to co-exist peacefully. We have consistently condemned obstacles to progress in the peace process, whether they are indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel or the continued expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied territories. ...

The motion and the debate have focused on UN Security Council resolution 2334, which is something of a milestone and should be welcomed as a demonstration of the potential role to be played by the United Nations. ... The resolution makes clear that the settlements have no legal validity and, indeed, constitute a flagrant violation under international law. That surely remains the case, even in the light of the legislation passed by the Knesset to give retrospective legitimacy to the settlements. ...

What steps are the Government taking to ensure that the UK adheres to the UN Security Council's demand that, in their international relations, states distinguish between Israel and the occupied territories?...

Does he agree that the UK should not be trading with illegal settlements? As has been said repeatedly, a peaceful solution must be based on mutual respect and recognition on both sides. That applies not only to the people of the states of Israel and Palestine, but to their supporters and allies in the international community. Under no circumstances are

attacks or abuse on the Jewish people, or any kind of manifestation of anti-Semitism, acceptable; anti-Semitism should be named as such and condemned. ...

col 719 The Scottish Government, in line with other Governments in Europe and the EU itself, does not advocate a policy of boycotting Israel. Nevertheless, we in the SNP are clear that trade and investment in illegal settlements should be discouraged, and the Scottish Government have published procurement guidance to reflect that position. ...

Emily Thornberry: .. The carefully drafted motion represents a consensus shared across the House. I know that there are many differences, and we have heard them today, but, actually, what unites us is so much more than that which divides us on this. It is important that we speak clearly and loudly about settlements.

Clearly, this is an important anniversary year, and the debate is very timely. When we look at the great sweep of history, from the six-day war and its aftermath to the UN partition plan and all the way back to Balfour, it is quite clear that, in many ways and in context, we seem to have come to a halt. ...

It is as if we have been blowing hot and cold. What is going on? Are the Government losing their nerve? The Government's official explanation was that they chose not to attend because no Israeli or Palestinian representatives were present, but that does not make sense, because the Paris conference was not some kind of quixotic attempt to bypass the need for bilateral negotiations, but an attempt to affirm support for them. ...

col 720 I am afraid that the clear subtext to the decision on Paris was the election of President Trump in the United States. ... We just need to consider the words of Naftali Bennett, one of the most influential Members of Netanyahu's Cabinet. Following the election of Donald Trump, he said: "The era of a Palestinian state is over." Mr Bennett's regulation Bill seeks to legalise the construction of settlements on privately owned land retrospectively and it should be condemned. ...

col 721 A single state, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan river can be one of two things: it can either be Jewish, or it can be democratic ... it cannot be both.

As friends of Israel and friends of Palestine, there is no time for the UK to sit on the side lines. ... but we have heard positive words from Mr Trump at times. He said, for example, that he "would love to be able to be the one that made peace with Israel and the Palestinians", and that he has "reason to believe" that he can do that. ...

I am deeply disappointed that the Government continue to fail to recognise the Palestinian state. Now is the time. ... What thought have the Government put into how settlement goods could be separated from other Israeli goods, as many people do not wish to buy settlement goods? ...

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Tobias Ellwood): ... The focus of today's debate is Israeli settlements, but may I begin, as others have, by firmly underlining our deep friendship with Israel, its people and its absolute right to exist and defend itself? Israel is a democratic state in a difficult neighbourhood. In the year in which we mark the 100th anniversary of the Balfour declaration, which underlines our shared history, we continue to have an interest—as a nation, an ally, a regional partner and a permanent member of the UN Security Council—in understanding the challenges faced by the region, ... To be clear: the solution cannot be imposed on the Israelis or the Palestinians, but the international community has an important role to play.

Although important, the matter of settlements is not the only issue but one of a number. The immediate removal of settlements would not immediately lead to peace. Trends on the ground, including violence, terrorism and incitement, as well as settlement expansion, are seemingly leading to a steady drift from peace and making the prospect of a two-state solution look very much impossible. It is in no one's interests to see that drift towards a one-state solution. ...

UN Security Council resolution 2334 was mentioned by a number of hon. Members. It should come as no surprise that we voted in favour of it in December, because we have long supported the two-state solution and the notion of Israel as the Jewish homeland.

We should recognise what the resolution actually said. It proposed three important and balanced steps to support peace in the region, including calls for both parties to prevent the incitement of acts of violence, to build and create conditions for peace and to work together to allow credible negotiations to start. ...

The regularisation Bill has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. A new and dangerous threshold was crossed with that Bill. ...

col 723 On the recognition of Palestine, we need the Palestinians to do more to prevent the incitement of violence. President Abbas condemns certain aspects of it, but we are still seeing schools and squares being named after terrorists. These are not the confidence-building measures we need see. There is no relationship with Hamas at all. Those confidence-building measures are the steps that will allow us to move forward, so that there can be a recognition in the long term of the state of Palestine, but they are not there yet. The younger generation has given up on its own leadership, choosing instead to try to take a fast track to paradise by grabbing a knife and killing an Israeli soldier, and that is a terrible state of affairs to be in.

The British Government continue to believe that the only way to a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is the two-state solution, but there are a number of obstacles to peace, including settlements and continued violence and incitement. We remain committed to working closely with our international partners, including the new US Administration, to promote an environment conducive to peace. We continue to support both parties to take steps towards a negotiated settlement that brings peace, security and prosperity to Israelis and Palestinians. Everyone has the right to call somewhere their home.

Everyone has the right to be safe in that home. And no one should live in fear of their neighbours. ...

Desmond Swayne: My fear is that a sufficient number of Israeli politicians have drawn precisely the opposite conclusion to John Kerry and believe that they can indeed build towards the exclusion of a Palestinian state and yet withhold civil rights within Israel on the grounds that the Palestinians must seek those civil rights in Jordan or in sub-state Bantustans. This is the 50th year of the occupation, ...

Question put and agreed to. Resolved, That this House reaffirms its support for the negotiation of a lasting peace between two sovereign states of Israel and Palestine, both of which must be viable and contiguous within secure and internationally recognised borders; calls on the Government to take an active role in facilitating a resumption of international talks to achieve this; welcomes UN Security Council Resolution 2334 adopted on 23 December 2016; and further calls on the government of Israel immediately to halt the planning and construction of residential settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories which is both contrary to international law and undermines the prospects for the contiguity and viability of the state of Palestine.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-02-09/debates/98542971-A8BD-4692-8816-164ED89709F9/OccupiedPalestinianTerritoriesIsraeliSettlements>

House of Commons Oral Answer

Topical Questions: International Trade

T2. **Craig Tracey:** I welcome the recent establishment of a UK-Israel trade working group. Bilateral trade between the two countries has increased year on year, and our close co-operation in cyber, academia and medicine continues to grow. Can the Minister provide any further information about how the group will work, and does he share my view that we should strike one of our first trade deals with the middle east's only democracy? [908710]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Mark Garnier): My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the very good trading

relationship we have, and hope to continue to have, with Israel. The Prime Minister announced the trade working group when the Israeli Prime Minister visited earlier this week, but it is worth bearing in mind that the EU already has a trade arrangement with Israel, and this is something that, in the first instance, we would look to continue. I am sure, however, that there will be many opportunities to improve on that, given that that trade deal was done between one country and 28 countries, whereas a bilateral deal will be easier to negotiate.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-02-09/debates/0899F282-74C2-45A7-A3E8-D903E91701E7/TopicalQuestions#contribution-A39442E1-1D16-4DBE-96BC-20DA8BF9054C>

House of Commons Written Answers

Trade Agreements

Stephen Gethins [62826] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January 2017 to Question 60711, with which other countries or groups of countries the Government is planning to enter trade negotiations after the UK leaves the EU.

Greg Hands: As the UK leaves the EU, we are looking at all opportunities to strengthen our trading relationships. Ministers and officials in DIT are working with counterparts in a wide range of markets to promote the UK as a great place to do business and with which to trade.

Since the answer of 27 January, the Prime Minister has agreed with President Trump to take forward high-level talks to lay the groundwork for a UK-US trade agreement once we leave the EU, and to identify the practical steps we can take now. The Prime Minister also announced Joint Working Groups with Turkey and Israel to continue to progress our trade and investment relationships at present, and to prepare the ground for our post-Brexit trading arrangements.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-02-02/62826/>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2017-01-19/60711/>

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Other Relevant Information

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Delivering the Prevent duty in a proportionate and fair way: A guide for higher education providers in England on how to use equality and human rights law in the context of Prevent

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/delivering-the-prevent-duty.pdf>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/arbitrationandmediationservicesequality.html>

Assisted Dying Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/assisteddying.html>

Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/culturalpropertyarmedconflicts.html>

Lobbying (Transparency) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/lobbyingtransparency.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Promotion of Israeli-Palestinian Peace (United Kingdom Participation)

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/promotionofisraelipalestinianpeaceunitedkingdomparticipation.html>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 5 days**

Consolidation and revision of the school governance regulatory framework in Wales

(closing date 17 February 2017)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/consolidation-and-revision-school-governance-regulatory-framework-wales>

**** closes in 7 days**

Measurement framework for equality and human rights (closing date 21 February 2017)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-measurement-framework/measurement-framework-consultation>

Racism at work (closing date 27 February 2017)

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RacismAtWork>

Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: increasing numbers of successful donations (Scotland) (closing date 14 March 2017)

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511160.pdf>

The UK's policy towards the Middle East Peace Process (closing date 30 March 2017)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/foreign-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/middle-east-peace-process-inquiry-16-17/>

Adoption and Children (Northern Ireland) Bill (closing date 10 April 2017)

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/adoption-and-children-northern-ireland-bill>

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SCO29438