

# Political Affairs Digest

*A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community*

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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## Home Affairs

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#### Terrorism

**Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated)** [HL8797] To ask Her Majesty's Government how many (1) Muslim, and (2) non-Muslim women have been remanded or convicted under any terrorism legislation since 2010.

**Lord Keen of Elie:** 28 women have been remanded or convicted under terrorism legislation since 2010. Of these, 27 were Muslim and 1 was non-Muslim.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-19/HL8797/>

#### Terrorism

**Baroness Uddin (Non-affiliated)** [HL8798] To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the average length of sentence for (1) Muslim, and (2) non-Muslim women convicted under any terrorism legislation since 2010.

**Lord Keen of Elie:** It is not possible to determine the average sentence length of a cohort that includes indeterminate sentences. The Home Office releases statistics quarterly on The Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation. The most recent publication was released on 14 June 2018 and includes public statistics relating to sentence length of all offenders convicted under this Act since 2009-10 until 2017-18. These can be found using the following link:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/716000/police-powers-terrorism-mar2018-hosb0918.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716000/police-powers-terrorism-mar2018-hosb0918.pdf).

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-19/HL8798/>

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## Westminster Hall Debate

### UK-Israel Trade

*col 63WH* **Chris Green (Conservative):** ... The Prince's visit to Israel last week was a strong symbolic sign that the relationship between our two great nations is better than ever. One can also point to the remarkable record levels of trade to see how tangible this flourishing relationship truly is. ...

Many people, as I did before my visits to Israel nearly 20 years ago, think of the country through the prism of its biblical narrative. They think of deserts, mountains and the Sea of Galilee, but the reality for many Israelis is very different. The Israelis have created a country that is every bit as advanced as Britain and the United States of America, which shows what can be done with talent and an immense amount of hard work. ...

The UK-Israel friendship runs deep, from our shared democratic values to our extensive co-operation in the fields of intelligence, defence and cyber-security. Prince William was right to point out our record levels of bilateral trade, which reached £6.9 billion last year. In the first five months of 2018 alone, UK-Israel trade reached £3.3 billion—a 22% increase compared with the same time last year. This year-on-year increase in the value of bilateral trade has been happening now for almost a decade. ...

*col 64WH* **James Morris (Conservative):** ... Does my hon. Friend agree that Israel has become a global powerhouse for research and development ... but that the level of research and development co-operation between the UK and Israel is probably not as high as it could be? Does he think there are further opportunities there for British companies to take advantage of the R&D powerhouse being created in Israel?

**Chris Green:** I agree entirely. ...

Britain is ... Israel's second largest export destination after the United States of America and its principal trading destination in Europe. About 30 Israeli companies are registered on the London stock exchange and about 300 Israeli companies operate in the UK, employing thousands of Britons. ...

**Matthew Offord (Conservative):** ... Is he aware that Israel has the highest density of start-up companies in the world? There is one start-up company for every 1,600 people within the population. ...

*col 65WH* **Chris Green:** ... The culture of entrepreneurship and striving to achieve is reflected in the fact that there have been 12 Israeli Nobel prize winners in the fields of peace, literature, physics, chemistry, medicines and economics ...

The UK-Israel tech hub is one of the first of its kind to promote partnerships in technology and innovation between the two countries. It has generated 175 tech partnerships in deals worth £85 million since it was established, and it has helped to boost the UK economy by an estimated £800 million. ...

**Nigel Dodds (DUP):** ... Does he agree that it is gratifying to hear that the UK has prioritised a free trade agreement and trade links with Israel post Brexit? ...

*col 66WH* **Chris Green:** ... The UK has signed countless agreements with Israel in science and innovation, and Israeli and British scientists work together every day on cutting-edge research. The Britain Israel Research and Academic Exchange Partnership is a significant part of that, bringing researchers from both countries together to tackle some of the world's most challenging medical conditions and diseases, including cardiovascular and liver disease, diabetes and Parkinson's. ...

Israel was one of the first countries that we began discussions with following our vote to leave the European Union. Last year we created the UK-Israel trade working group, which will ensure a smooth post-Brexit transition and is exploring opportunities to maximise further trade. ...

**Richard Burden (Labour)** ... Does he agree that the definitions in the EU-Israel

association agreement, particularly in relation to the settlements, should carry through into any bilateral trading relationship that Britain has with Israel? The trade preferences available under the EU-Israel association agreement do not extend to illegal settlements in the west bank.

**Chris Green:** I think we ought not to bind ourselves. ...

**Andy Slaughter (Labour):** ... it is unquestionably the Foreign Office's view that the settlements are illegal under international law. Article 2 of the EU-Israel association agreement provides that human rights considerations should be instrumental. Surely he would want that to carry through, irrespective of any other terms? ...

*col 67WH* **Mark Harper (Conservative):** We have to recognise that strengthening businesses, businesspeople and the economies on both sides—in Israel and the occupied territories—is how we will achieve a viable two-state solution. Doing as the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement wants, which is to discriminate against businesses in Israel without distinguishing where they are, will damage the economy and the interests of not only Israelis, but Palestinians seeking to earn a living. ...

**Matthew Offord:** Is my hon. Friend aware that more than 500 Palestinians lost their jobs after the SodaStream factory in the west bank was forced to close after the campaign by the BDS movement? ... Does he agree that that was a disgraceful campaign against people in the west bank?

**Chris Green:** ... Forcing people to be unemployed and kicking them out of their jobs is appalling and damaging to them, their families and the wider communities. ...

*col 68WH* **Louise Ellman (Labour Co-op)** ... Israel is a vibrant start-up country with a strong business sector, a strong trade union sector, through the Histadrut, and a strong co-operative sector. It also has a strong welfare state and excellent universal healthcare. ... Thousands of people in this country manufacture products and goods that are sold in Israel, and more than 300 Israeli companies employ thousands of people in the UK, in areas such as high tech, finance and pharmaceuticals. There are very strong educational links between our two countries. ...

Israeli medical technology. PillCam is the first pill that can be swallowed to record images of the digestive tract. It was invented and developed in Israel. Babysense is a system that protects babies from sudden infant death syndrome. It was invented in Israel. I could also mention cancer probes, heart catheters, the bedside blood count device developed by PixCell Medical Technologies and the artificial cornea developed by CorNeat Vision. *col 69WH* All are positive developments that help people to lead a better life. Reference has already been made to the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions campaign, which advocates boycotts between the UK and Israel—it is against UK-Israel trade. I wonder whether it has dared to campaign against the use of those lifesaving products. I suspect not. ...

**Richard Burden:** ... the Foreign Office's own advice to UK businesses ... states: "Settlements are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impossible. We will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties.

There are therefore clear risks related to economic and financial activities in the settlements, and we do not encourage or offer support to such activity."

Will my hon. Friend endorse that statement from the Foreign Office advice?

**Louise Ellman:** Settlements are one barrier to peace, but they are not insuperable and not the only barrier to peace. The most fundamental barrier to a peaceful solution of this tragic conflict, and the key factor that prevents the setting up of two states, Israel and Palestine, is the Palestinians' refusal explicitly to recognise the legitimacy of Israel as a national Jewish home. ...

Trade is constructive; boycotts are negative. The BDS movement is fundamentally opposed to the state of Israel, and partial boycott campaigns, however presented, are

part of the same movement. BDS has not affected Israel adversely. Israel's trade is rising, both with the UK and with the rest of the world. ...

*col 70WH* **Mark Harper (Conservative):** ... The work that Britain and Israel, and their companies, do together does not just develop business relationships; it helps keep both countries safer in a very dangerous world. Those companies work together to keep businesses and consumers safe from the threats from organised crime, but they also help our Governments and security agencies keep us safe from those who would do us harm. ...

... we visited the SodaStream factory ... [and] saw a company that employs Israeli Jews, Israeli Arabs, Bedouins and Palestinians. We met a Palestinian manager who travels there from the west bank. He manages a team of employees, including Israelis. I thought it was a very powerful symbol. There are people coming together, from a range of different communities, and working together to make their business successful. ...

*col 71WH* One of the things that struck me about how business can be powerful was something that one of the Israeli managers at SodaStream mentioned. They had recently had a day when they could bring their sons or daughters to work, as we do in the UK. When his son came to that business, meeting his father's colleagues and their children, it was one of the first times he had met Palestinians in an environment that was conducive to sharing ideas and furthering understanding between those two communities. ...

All of those business people were up for, and encouraging of, growing the Israeli economy and the Palestinian economy. I hope that the Minister will take away the message that Britain should encourage economic development in the Palestinian territories as well as growing our trade with Israel, so that when the political conditions are right—I know that they are challenging—we will have a thriving economy to underpin the success of a two-state solution. ...

*col 72WH* **Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... Israel has become renowned for its high-tech capability and innovative technological solutions. The UK and Israel share a close relationship in research and development, yet there is still more that can be done. What are the Government doing to unlock that potential? ...

*col 73WH* **Iain Stewart (Conservative):** ... For many years Israel has had a reputation for developing the technology solutions to many of the world's challenges. For many years it has had an effective irrigation system to water a very dry part of the world. That technology is exported, particularly to developing countries that face similar challenges ...

*col 74WH* **Andy Slaughter:** ... My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) read out the Foreign Office position, which I am sure the Minister will adhere to, even if the Foreign Secretary sometimes does not. The position is straightforward, if somewhat illogical: settlements are illegal under international law, but buying settlement products should be a matter for consumer choice. There seems to be an illogicality in that. ...

First, the settlements are a transfer of population to occupied territory and are therefore considered a war crime under the fourth Geneva convention. Secondly, I referred to Khan al-Ahmar, a village that is under imminent threat of demolition. ... that demolition would constitute forcible transfer and a war crime under international law ...

Thirdly, there are the disgraceful events that we saw on the Gaza border last month in which more than 130 Palestinians, including children and medics, were killed. Such use of lethal force constitutes wilful killing and, again, is a grave breach of the fourth Geneva convention. The EU trade association agreement could be criticised in that article 2 is not being enforced, but it is there at the moment, so my third point is addressed directly to the Minister. If we are in a post-Brexit situation—if we are—and an agreement is being negotiated, will those terms be carried across? ...

*col 75WH* How would Members here like it if foreign entities were operating in this country without our consent, which is what happens to the Palestinians? ...

Companies should not carry on business activities in the settlements or with individuals in

the settlements. They should not trade in goods originally from the settlements, nor provide goods or services that are used for the benefit of settlements. They should not engage in any business activity that contributes directly or indirectly to the maintenance, development or expansion of the settlements. Those are the criteria and standards we should set. Once we have done that, we can perhaps go on to talk about trade. This matter is not about BDS. It is about international law and our treaty obligations as a democracy that believes in the rule of law. ...

*col 76WH* **John Howell (Conservative):** ... I have been to a desalination plant on the coast of Israel. Sadly, the technology that was envisaged for the plant had been offered to the people who live in Gaza, but had been rejected. ... Israel recycles some 90% of its domestic waste water, which is mostly used in agricultural production. By way of comparison, in Spain, the next biggest user of recycled water, only 20% is used for agriculture. Israel's drip irrigation technology is exported throughout the world.

... the boycott, divestment and sanctions regime ... affects the livelihoods of Palestinians as much as those of Israelis and prejudices the outcome of the debate; it is an issue to be tackled in the debate, but it does not define the whole debate. Where are the similar boycott, divestment and sanctions calls in relation to the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus, or the Moroccan occupation of the controlled Western Sahara? We have a blinkered view of Israel in some sections of this country, and we need to overcome it by encouraging more companies to do business there. ...

*col 77WH* **Alan Mak (Conservative):** ... Israel is the original start-up nation and a global powerhouse for science, technology and innovation. It is a key driver of the fourth industrial revolution. ...

I hope that the Minister will join me in championing Israel as one of the UK's leading partners and will make sure that both countries benefit from the present exciting period of technological innovation. ...

*col 79WH* **Peter Grant (SNP):** ... I have always thought that Israel is something of an enigma in the world. ... there is no doubt that the advances in knowledge and research that Israel helps to promote have the potential, and sometimes the actuality, to benefit humankind well beyond that country's borders. At the same time, however, Israel is almost an outlaw; it is a criminal, and it is acting against international law every day of the week. There have been a number of serious, lethal attacks on civilians for which nobody in Israel has yet been held to account. Just as it would be wrong to completely demonise Israel and treat it as a pariah state, and wrong to ignore the atrocities committed by some on the Palestinian side, so it is wrong to talk about Israel only as a place from which Britons may get rich, and to ignore some of the human rights issues that perhaps do not affect many people living within Israel's borders, but that certainly affect many who live within the borders of Palestine. ...

Today's debate, presumably not by accident, is not about trade with Palestine; it is about trade with Israel. If someone applied for a debate on UK-Palestine trade, and enhancing and expanding fair trade networks between the United Kingdom and Palestine, I wonder how many of the people who were so desperate to speak in this debate would be as desperate to speak in that one. ...

*col 80WH* I want the Minister to give an absolute assurance that after we leave the European Union, nothing will be done to land a deal with Israel that will make it easier for goods that have been produced illegally in the illegally occupied territories to be exported here. We should regard those goods as the proceeds of crime. ...

To clarify, I am talking about trade with areas that are under illegal occupation by Israel, and where Israel has illegally occupied parts of Palestine. I do not think that "settlements" is the correct term; this is an illegal occupation, and we should not be looking to trade with any business carried out under the illegal Israeli settlement or occupation ...

Another area that has not yet been touched on but must be mentioned is the UK's massively increasing weapons sales to Israel. UK arms sales licences to Israel have increased by 1,100% in two years, and in 2017 the value of licences awarded was £220

million. Israel is about our 45th biggest export customer, but it is our eighth biggest arms export customer. Consider what the Israel defence forces have been using some of those small arms to do over the past two or three months—it is time for those arms sales to stop.

*col 81WH* I do not deny, and I would never argue about, the right of Israel to exist or defend itself against aggressors, and I would never argue about the fact that Israel faces an aggressor in some of the more militant elements within Palestine. However, children being shot with high velocity sniper rifles; medics whose only weapon is a first-aid box being shot from a distance with high-velocity precision rifles by highly trained and skilled snipers—those are not acts of self-defence, those are acts of unlawful killing and should be called out as that. The United Kingdom should not be selling weapons to anybody who is still under investigation for such crimes. ...

We do not support an all-out boycott of Israel, and I do not think that would work. ...

... if we had a debate this afternoon about expanding the opportunity for Palestinian producers with fair trade products to export those products to the United Kingdom, how many hon. Members would be desperate to come here and speak in that debate? Perhaps that is part of the problem. When we talk about our relationship with Israel, the debate is always oversubscribed. When we talk about trade with Palestine, which has the potential to ease significantly the poverty of people there, we do not get the same level of interest from Members of this Parliament. That unfortunate imbalance should be addressed. ...

*col 82WH* **Bill Esterson (Labour):** ... The EU-Israel association agreement ... grants Israeli exports preferential access to the UK market, along with the markets of other EU member states. It was supplemented by an agreement on agriculture that came into force at the beginning of 2010, and by a mutual recognition agreement on pharmaceutical products that came into effect in January 2013. Labour would welcome a new trade agreement with Israel to maintain the same market access opportunities for goods, and to deepen a potential relationship in the trade of services, where the UK has an obvious comparative advantage. ...

*col 83WH* Will the Minister confirm that any UK-Israel trade agreement will maintain the existing clarity about the fact that market access preferences offered to Israeli exports into the UK do not extend to goods produced in settlements in the illegally occupied Palestinian territories? ...

I trust that the Minister will confirm that respect for human rights and democratic principles will be an essential element of any new UK-Israel agreement. ...

*col 84WH* Any trade deal that the UK makes with Israel must include strong guarantees that democratic principles and a fundamental respect for human rights will form a large component of that deal. ...

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Graham Stuart):** ... It is now 70 years since Israel was founded, and the UK-Israeli relationship is firm. In the last month alone, the Prime Minister has met Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Prince William, as has been discussed, has made the first ever official visit to Israel by a senior royal—one that was very well received.

That relationship is also backed by a strong trade and investment relationship, which many Members have discussed this afternoon. As of 2016, our total trade with Israel was worth £3.6 billion per year, with a £570 million surplus for the UK, according to our figures. We are Israel's largest goods export market in the European Union and its second largest in the whole world. We are also a significant destination for Israeli investment. ...

*col 85WH* In places such as Palestine, which are on a developmental path, it is absolutely essential that we engage with business, and it was inspiring to hear stories of businesses acting as a facilitator to bring different communities together. I am sure he is right that, through the building of prosperity, security and development go hand in hand. ...

col 86WH I want to be absolutely clear that we believe that the level of control that Israel has over the west bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip amounts to occupation under international law. As has been said, the existing EU-Israeli agreements do not extend to Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories, and we intend there to be a technical transfer of those agreements as they stand. ...

Meanwhile, Israel—as has been said—is the start-up nation, and it spends 4.3% of GDP on research and development, which is the highest figure in the OECD. We are seeing UK-Israel business-to-business links grow and grow. ...

We are seeing our links grow on an institution-to-institution basis, such as the Royal Society's co-operation agreement with the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities ... We are also seeing growing co-operation between our Governments. ...

... I will just say something briefly on the subject of arms, which was mentioned, including the specific case of sniper rifles. Only four licences were granted last year for targeting equipment: two were temporary licences for demonstration purposes; one was to return an item to its Israeli manufacturer after tests in the UK; and one was for laser illuminators for end use by the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. On the subject of sniper rifles, the UK has not licensed the export of sniper rifles to the Israeli defence forces. We have granted only two licenses in the last decade for a total of six sniper rifles and magazines, and they were for an Israeli defence company to test ammunition on its own firing range. ...

col 87WH **Chris Green:** ... It is so important that we have strong trade, because good trade is good for workers and I am therefore delighted to see the level of UK-Israel solidarity. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-07-03/debates/75593B38-F8B9-4B15-875A-E3625CDEB51E/UK-IsraelTrade>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Middle East: Peace Negotiations

**Chris Williamson (Labour)** [157111] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the merits of the US Administration continuing its role as an honest broker in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

**Alistair Burt:** We welcome and share President Trump's desire to bring an end to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. We agree on the importance of the US bringing forward detailed proposals for a viable peace agreement that addresses the legitimate concerns of both parties. We continue to believe the best way to achieve this is through substantive peace talks between the parties leading to a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-25/157111/>

### Overseas Trade: Israeli Settlements

**Chris Williamson (Labour)** [157113] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, if he will review the guidance provided to businesses and banks on trading with illegal Israeli settlements.

**George Hollingbery:** The UK and Israel have a strong and important trading relationship and we are firmly opposed to boycotts or sanctions. We do not recognise the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the settlements, as part of Israel and they are not covered by the current EU-Israel Association Agreement, which governs our trade with Israel.

It is up to individual businesses whether they undertake business dealings with companies operating in illegal settlements. The Government neither supports nor

encourages such dealings. The FCO advises businesses on the risks of so doing.  
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-25/157113/>

### **Israeli Settlements**

**Chris Williamson (Labour)** [157114] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether UK missions in Israel and Palestine purchase goods produced in illegal settlements.

**Alistair Burt:** Neither our Embassy in Tel Aviv nor our Consulate-General in Jerusalem purchase goods from Israeli settlements. The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-25/157114/>

### **Gaza: Infrastructure**

**Dan Carden (Labour)** [157852] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support the long-term development of (a) healthcare, (b) electricity, (c) sanitation and (d) other vital infrastructure in Gaza.

**Alistair Burt:** a) We are supporting 11 hospitals in Gaza through £1.5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Our longstanding support to UNRWA provides primary healthcare to 1.3 million people in Gaza. The UK regularly raises the issuance of medical permits, which is vital for healthcare for Gazans, with the Israeli authorities.

b) The UK will work with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, other donors and the Office of the Quartet to provide a sustainable electricity supply to Gaza. This requires greater domestic electricity capacity and energy imports from Israel and Egypt as well as institutional reform.

c) UK funding to UNICEF is helping 2 million Gazans access clean safe water and stopping the spread of disease by providing over 1000 roof water tanks and disinfecting 280 wells, 38 desalination plants and 40 reservoirs.

d) The UK has already provided support to water infrastructure and will support other infrastructure investments through our new economic development programme. We welcome the proposals of UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mladenov, and are keen to see further details.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-26/157852/>

### **Gaza: Visits Abroad**

**Dan Carden (Labour)** [157853] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support and facilitate access of hon. Members to Gaza.

**Alistair Burt:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises against all travel to Gaza. Entry to, and exit from, Gaza can be very difficult. Permission to access Gaza is granted by either the Israeli or Egyptian authorities. Any specific request from Members of Parliament for assistance from the Government would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-26/157853/>

### **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

**Dan Carden (Labour)** [157854] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to engage with Palestinian civil society groups as part of the provision of UK foreign assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Alistair Burt:** DFID's priorities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are to promote economic opportunities, provide humanitarian relief and improve governance. In the course of this work we regularly meet Palestinian civil society organisations such as the local chapter of Transparency International, ALLMEP and Search for Common Ground. We only provide funding to organisations following a rigorous due diligence process.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-26/157854/>

#### **Palestinians: Overseas Aid**

**Dan Carden (Labour)** [157855] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support improved (a) electricity provision b) rates and speed of approvals for patient permits and c) access to construction materials in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Alistair Burt:** a) The UK will work with Israel, the Palestinian Authority, other donors and the Office of the Quartet to provide a sustainable electricity supply to Gaza. This requires greater domestic electricity capacity and energy imports from Israel and Egypt as well as institutional reform.

b) My officials and I regularly raise the issuance of medical permits. I most recently raised our concerns about the situation in Gaza with the office for the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) in May. We hold regular discussions with the Palestinian Ministry of Health on their plans to respond to the immediate needs in the health sector in Gaza.

c) DFID enables reconstruction efforts in Gaza through our support to the Materials Monitoring Unit of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, which monitors the import, storage, supply and use of construction materials. The UK continues to call for a more comprehensive lifting of movement and access restrictions through a political agreement as the only long-term solution to construction efforts.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-06-26/157855/>

## **House of Lords Written Answers**

#### **Israel: Palestinians**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8749] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel regarding reported incidents of the knee-capping of Palestinians protesters.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are not aware of the specific incidents referred to. The Foreign Secretary, the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa and I have all raised the use of excessive force with Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-18/HL8749/>

#### **Israel: Gaza**

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8751] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel about the Israeli military's use of drones which drop firebombs within the borders of Gaza.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We are not aware of these specific incidents and have not raised them with the Israeli authorities. We continue to raise our concerns over the situation in Gaza with the Israeli authorities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-18/HL8751/>

### Israel: West Bank

**Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated)** [HL8793] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they are making to the government of Israel following the new Israeli military order taking effect which negates the existing planning and building system in the West Bank and abolishes the right to appeal against planned demolitions or to obtain a permit retroactively.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** Officials from our Embassy in Tel Aviv raised this issue with the Israeli authorities on 22 May. We are concerned that the military order would severely limit the opportunity to appeal before demolitions are carried out.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-19/HL8793/>

### Israel: Palestinians

**Lord Warner (Crossbench)** [HL8804] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they have received in the past 12 months about the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli Defence Force in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; and what assessment they have made of the case for referring the government of Israel to the International Criminal Court.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has received a number of parliamentary questions from members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, letters from Members of Parliament on behalf of their constituents, and letters and emails from members of the public on the issue of the alleged disproportionate use of force by the Israeli Defence Forces. The International Criminal Court Prosecutor has been conducting a Preliminary Examination into the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 2015 and on 8 April released a statement saying that, "any new alleged crime committed in the context of the situation in Palestine may be subjected to my Office's scrutiny". The Government respects the Prosecutor's independence in this matter.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-06-19/HL8804/>

## United Nations

### **Palestinian Bedouin community faces demolition after Israeli court ruling, warns UN rights office**

Spokesperson Liz Throssell said that the imminent destruction of buildings used by Khan al Ahmar al Helu residents comes after the Israeli High Court ruled against any further delay.

"The community is home to 181 people - more than half of them children," Ms Throssell told journalists in Geneva, noting that it is "at high risk of forcible transfer" owing to Israeli practices and policies "that coerce people and communities to move".

The Khan al Ahmar al Helu community has spent the last decade opposing the move in a part of the central West Bank called Area C.

In total, around 7,000 people from 46 Bedouin communities live there "and we are concerned about all of them", the OHCHR spokesperson said, noting that the community is located near existing "large Israeli settlements".

Describing Israel's planning policy as "discriminatory" and incompatible with international law, Ms Throssell explained that "most properties are considered illegal" because planning permits are not granted to Palestinians in the area.

In an appeal to the Israeli authorities, the OHCHR spokesperson said that if the demolitions went ahead, "people would lose their homes, children would lose their

schools” and residents “would lose their community”.

Such a development would “likely amount to forced evictions” and violate the community’s right to housing, Ms Throssell said.

She added that once demolitions take place, the community is expected to be encouraged to move about 10 kilometres away to a suburban area on the outskirts of East Jerusalem.

Such a move is “not really appropriate for a community that has animals and needs grazing”, Ms Throssell said, adding that this had happened before, affecting 150 Bedouin Palestine refugee families between 1997 and 2007.

“The demolition itself may not amount necessarily to forced eviction – the people may try to stay in the area,” she said. “But as you can imagine, it really increases the risk of forced transfer, so our main call to the Israelis, is not to proceed with the demolition of this community.”

Ms Throssell added that international humanitarian law prohibits the forced transfer of the population of an occupied territory, regardless of the motive.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1013832>

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## Foreign Affairs

### UK Parliament Early Day Motion

**Fiona Bruce (Conservative) (1478) Annual International Day commemorating the victims and survivors of religious persecution** – That this House is concerned about growing religious persecution of minority groups worldwide, which may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes or even genocide; calls on the Government to better track such violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief and to consider developing strategic action plans to address such incidents before they reach the threshold of mass atrocities; and further calls on the Government to support a proposal for the establishment of an annual International Day Commemorating the Victims and Survivors of Religious Persecution, and to support the tabling of a UN General Assembly resolution for this, the proposed date being the 3 August each year, being the day when Daesh unleashed its genocidal campaign against the Yazidis in Sinjar, followed by a similar campaign against Christians and other religious minorities in the region and so engage the UN and its member states to strengthen their efforts to address religious persecution around the world.

<https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/1478>

### Downing Street

#### **Lord Ahmad appointed as PM’s Special Envoy to promote religious freedom**

Lord Ahmad has today been appointed as the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The role, which supports the Prime Minister’s commitment to religious tolerance in the UK, will allow Lord Ahmad to demonstrate the country’s commitment to religious freedom by promoting inter-faith respect and dialogue internationally.

Lord Ahmad, who is also Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, will promote the UK’s firm stance on religious tolerance abroad, helping to tackle religious discrimination in countries where minority faith groups face persecution.

The appointment underscores the Prime Minister’s commitment to tackling religious

prejudice in all its forms and follows the government's recent announcement of a further £1 million funding for places of worship that have been subjected to hate crime attacks. Prime Minister Theresa May said: Religious discrimination blights the lives of millions of people across the globe and leads to conflict and instability. Both here and abroad, individuals are being denied the basic right of being able to practise their faith free of fear.

Tolerance for those of different faiths is fundamental to our values, and is an issue I know is already of great importance to Lord Ahmad, who is constantly looking for fresh ways to promote religious liberty in his role as Minister for Human Rights at the Foreign Office.

I look forward to supporting him in this new role as he works with faith groups and governments across the world to raise understanding of religious persecution and what we can do to eliminate it.

The PM's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said: In too many parts of the world, religious minorities are persecuted, discriminated against and treated as second class citizens. As a man of faith, I feel this very keenly.

Freedom of Religion or Belief is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It must be respected. People from all faiths or none should be free to practise as they wish. This respect is key to global stability, and is in all our interests.

I am delighted to have been appointed as the PM's Special Envoy. I shall use the UK Government's global network to reach across religious divides, seek the elimination of discrimination on the basis of religion or belief and bring different communities together.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-ahmad-appointed-as-pms-special-envoy-to-promote-religious-freedom>

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## **Relevant Legislation** \*\* new or updated today

### **UK Parliament**

#### **Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

#### **Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

#### **Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

### **Scottish Parliament**

#### **Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108681.aspx>

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## Consultations

\*\* new or updated today

**\*\* closes in 9 days**

**Ecclesiastical exemption and guidance on scheduled monuments** (closing date 13 July 2018)

<https://beta.gov.wales/ecclesiastical-exemption-and-guidance-scheduled-monuments>

**Financial Memorandum of the Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill**

(closing date 31 August 2018)

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/109042.aspx>

**Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Bill** (closing date 4 September 2018)

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/108999.aspx>

**Antisemitism: Survey of European Jews** (closing date not stated)

<http://www.eurojews.eu/>

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