



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Library

International affairs and defence: Parliamentary debates and statements in the 2021-22 session

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9251/CBP-9251.pdf>

United Nations

Addressing Fourth Committee, Senior Officials Cite Funding Shortfalls Affecting Support to Palestine Refugees, Rights Violations in Occupied Territory

... **Philippe Lazzarini, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**, introduced his annual report (document A/76/13). He warned that, for the first time in decades, four out of the five areas where UNRWA operates are simultaneously in crisis: The Gaza Strip; the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; Lebanon; and Syria. As a result of the conflict in Gaza in May — the fourth since 2008 — UNRWA lost 20 of its students and over 1,300 shelters were damaged and made uninhabitable. The Agency is now providing food assistance to almost all Palestine refugees in Gaza, 70 per cent of the total population.

“No one wants to be a refugee,” he went on, adding: “No one enjoys being handed food and humanitarian assistance”. Unfortunately, sustaining quality services is becoming an impossible mission. ...

Turning to the Agency’s education services, he cited a recent study authored by the World Bank and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which argued that the UNRWA’s education programme is the best value for money and its students outperform their local counterparts by one year of learning. ... Citing its zero-tolerance policy for hate speech, incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, he declared: “To continue succeeding, [UNRWA] needs to be shielded from political attacks.” Turning to the Agency’s dire financial crisis, he stressed that UNRWA lacks the funds needed to operate in November and December and is suffering a shortfall of \$15 million in October alone. ...

... **the representative of Israel** said the fact that UNRWA pleads for new funding year after year proves that its work is unsustainable, while its inability to ease the situation of Palestinians across the region shows how ineffective the Agency is. Expressing shock at the Commissioner General's remarks about the Agency's educational system, he stated that he had intended to bring photographic evidence of an UNRWA teacher's social media post, featuring a picture glorifying Adolph Hitler, but he was prevented from doing so. In June, a Hamas tunnel was found under an UNRWA boys' school, he continued, adding that UNRWA textbooks contain passages that refer to Jews as "Satan's helpers" and display maps that erase Israel entirely. Moreover, it is clear that the Hamas terror organization continually uses UNRWA infrastructure to pursue its aims. ... As such, he called on the international community to cut off funding for an Agency that only exacerbates the conflict.

The representative of the European Union ... said UNRWA is an essential provider of services and a stabilizing force in the region. Indeed, until a solution to the issue of Palestine refugees is found, the Agency will remain essential. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine, expressed appreciation for UNRWA and dismissed accusations and attacks against it — including attacks on the Agency's education programme — as distortions and attempts to distract attention from the real issue, namely, the continuation of the conflict. ...

The representative of the United States said his country is proud to be the largest donor to UNRWA, having contributed more than \$315 million in 2021. ...

Sebnem Manav, representing the Chairmanship of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, briefed the Committee on the work of the Working Group as reflected in its recent report (document A/76/306). Noting that the financial difficulties faced by the Agency threaten the human development of Palestine refugees and the stability in the region, she said these challenges were further exacerbated by the challenges posed by COVID-19. With the Agency's programme budget shortfall currently standing at \$100 million, she urged the General Assembly and the international community to undertake efforts to ensure that UNRWA services are maintained at an acceptable level. ...

In its report, the Working Group commended UNWRA for the measures it has taken to increase its efficiency, while maintaining the quality of services to Palestine refugees, and for the measures taken to increase transparency through reporting to the International Aid Transparency Initiative. She urged Member States to provide UNRWA with unearmarked, multi-year funding ...

Peter Mohan Maithri Pieris (Sri Lanka), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, presented the fifty-third report of the Special Committee ... The report provides updates on human rights violations, including the escalation of hostilities in Gaza in May and the subsequent critical humanitarian situation. Stressing that the Special Committee was appalled by the 11-day confrontation between Israel, Hamas and Palestinian armed groups, he noted that it claimed lives of 257 Palestinians and caused substantial damage to civilian assets and infrastructure in Gaza, in violation of the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law. ...

... he said the Special Committee was particularly concerned by the situation of Bedouin and herder communities in the Jordan Valley and those located in areas designated by Israel as closed military zones.

Citing the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and the increase in violent attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians and their property since January, he noted the construction of an illegal building of the Evyatar outpost on private Palestinian land near the West Bank city of Nablus, which led to Israeli security forces using "incommensurate force" against Palestinians opposing the construction. He further spotlighted the impact of COVID-19 on a raft of human rights issues, including access to education, health care,

water, sanitation and restrictions on freedom of movement, as well as on the situation of Palestinian detainees. Noting that only 16 per cent of Palestinians eligible for vaccination against COVID-19 had reportedly received two doses as of 31 August, he called on Israel to comply with its international legal responsibility as the occupying Power in that regard. He also expressed the Special Committee's intention to continue to call upon the international community to use its influence and compel Israel to end its occupation. ...

Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), presented three reports, starting with the report of the Secretary-General on Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem ...

She said the report cites excessive use of force by Israeli Security Forces in the context of law enforcement, including unlawful killings, as well as undue restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment — practices that may amount to collective punishment and restrictions on freedom of movement. “A lack of accountability for international human rights and international humanitarian law violations by Israeli Security Forces remained pervasive,” she stated. Turning to the issue of freedom of movement, she noted that during the reporting period — from 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2021 — Israeli authorities continued to restrict movement across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including to and from Gaza, thus profoundly affecting the enjoyment of fundamental human rights such as the right to work, to an adequate standard of living, to health and education, and to family life.

Turning to the Secretary-General's report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan ... she observed that, during the reporting period, demolition and confiscations of Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, increased by 59 per cent in comparison to the previous period — the highest number since the United Nations began publicly recording them. She further noted intensified settler violence against Palestinians, stressing that on many occasions Israeli Security Forces intervened “with unnecessary and/or disproportionate force ...

[She also introduced] the latest report of the Secretary-General on the occupied Syrian Golan (document A/76/304) ...

The representative of Israel stressed that the Special Committee confirms its deep-seated bias against his country, year after year, while its recycled claims only incite hatred and silence discourse. Therefore, Israel objects to the operation of the Special Committee, whose sole purpose is to systematically attack the only vibrant democracy in the Middle East. Indeed, it outrageously attributes every Palestinian hardship to Israel, and its reports fail to mention that Hamas subjects Gaza's citizens to terror and uses Israel as a scapegoat. Moreover, the Special Committee's reports are based on unverified allegations, he said, pointing out that the historic Abraham Accords signed in recent months are evidence that Israel is tangibly working toward peace and stability in the region.

The representative of Jordan welcomed all the efforts made to secure a ceasefire after the recent escalation and to relaunch negotiations to establish an independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. ...

The observer for the State of Palestine said the reports before the Committee describe the distressing conditions that are a consequence of systematic violations of international law by Israel. ... If Palestinians are not allowed to use diplomatic tools available to them, she wondered what alternatives exist. In fact, the reports contain only a fraction of the suffering being endured by Palestinians daily. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/gaspd729.doc.htm>

Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East 1 January–31 December 2020 (A/76/13)

<https://undocs.org/A/76/13>

Report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/76/306)

<https://undocs.org/A/76/306>

The occupied Syrian Golan (A/76/304)

<https://undocs.org/A/76/304>

The following reports are not yet available online, but when they are published it is expected that the links will be as below:

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/76/360)

<https://undocs.org/A/76/360>

Report of the Secretary-General on Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/76/333)

<https://undocs.org/A/76/333>

Report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/76/336)

<https://undocs.org/A/76/336>

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Foreign Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UN Human Rights Council 48: UK statement for the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism

... The United Kingdom remains staunchly committed to tackling all forms of racism, whether that be at home or abroad. We remain resolute, and steadfast, in our mission to combat all forms of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Discrimination and intolerance of any kind has no place in society, and we will continue to treat all forms of intolerance with equal seriousness. That is why we are proud of Britain's strong legal framework, which penalises offences such as incitement to racial hatred and racially aggravated offences.

In addition to this strong framework, we also recently conducted a detailed, data-led examination of racism and inequality across the United Kingdom, and set out a positive agenda for change.

The examination, led by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, made 24 recommendations that will change for the better the lives of millions across the UK, whatever their ethnic or social background.

Internationally, we will continue to participate actively in anti-racism related mechanisms - such as this dialogue - to share best practice on upholding human rights obligations to tackle discrimination. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-48-uk-statement-for-the-interactive-dialogue-with-the-special-rapporteur-on-contemporary-forms-of-racism>

The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, referred to above, can be read at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331 - CRED Report - FINAL - Web Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf)

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Other Relevant Information

European Commission

Commission presents first-ever EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life

... the European Commission is presenting the first-ever EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life. With antisemitism worryingly on the rise, in Europe and beyond, the Strategy sets out a series of measures articulated around three pillars: to prevent all forms of antisemitism; to protect and foster Jewish life; and to promote research, education and Holocaust remembrance. The Strategy proposes measures to step up cooperation with online companies to curb antisemitism online, better protect public spaces and places of worship, set up a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and create a network of sites where the Holocaust happened. These measures will be reinforced by the EU's international efforts to lead the global fight against antisemitism.

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen said: "Today we commit to fostering Jewish life in Europe in all its diversity. We want to see Jewish life thriving again in the heart of our communities. This is how it should be. The Strategy we are presenting today is a step change in how we respond to antisemitism. Europe can only prosper when its Jewish communities feel safe and prosper."

Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas added: "Antisemitism is incompatible with EU values and with our European way of life. This strategy – the first of its kind - is our commitment to combat it in all its forms and to ensure a future for Jewish life in Europe and beyond. We owe it to those who perished in the Holocaust, we owe it to the survivors and we owe it to future generations." ...

Some of the key measures in the Strategy include: ...

- **Preventing and combating all forms of antisemitism:** Nine out of ten Jews consider that antisemitism has increased in their country, with 85% considering it a serious problem. To address this, the Commission will mobilise EU funds and support Member States in designing and implementing their national strategies. The Commission will support the creation of a Europe-wide network of trusted flaggers and Jewish organisations to remove illegal online hate speech. It will also support the development of narratives countering antisemitic content online. The Commission will cooperate with industry and IT companies to prevent the illegal display and selling of Nazi-related symbols, memorabilia and literature online.
- **Protecting and fostering Jewish life in the EU:** 38% of Jews have considered emigrating because they do not feel safe as Jews in the EU. To ensure that Jews feel safe and can participate fully in European life, the Commission will provide EU funding to better protect public spaces and places of worship. ... To foster Jewish life, the Commission will take measures to safeguard Jewish heritage and raise awareness around Jewish life, culture and traditions.

- **Education, research and Holocaust remembrance:** Currently, one European in 20 has never heard of the Holocaust. To keep the memory alive, the Commission will support the creation of a network of places where the Holocaust happened, but which are not always known, for instance hiding places or shooting grounds. The Commission will also support a new network of Young European Ambassadors to promote remembrance of the Holocaust. With EU funding, the Commission will support the creation of a European research hub on contemporary antisemitism and Jewish life, in cooperation with Member States and the research community. To highlight Jewish heritage, the Commission will invite cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture to address the history of their minorities, including Jewish community history. ...

To read the full press release see

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4990

EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism and Fostering Jewish Life (2021-2030)

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu-strategy-on-combating-antisemitism-and-fostering-jewish-life_october2021_en.pdf

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism Calls for a Moratorium on the Use of Surveillance Technology in the Immigration Enforcement Context

... **Tendayi Achiume, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance**, presented two reports to the Council - one thematic report on “racial and xenophobic discrimination and the use of digital technologies in border and immigration enforcement” and a report on “combatting the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”. A key finding from the first report was that Governments and non-State actors were developing and deploying new technologies in the immigration enforcement context with little regard for the human rights abuses, racially discriminatory structures, and experimental risks engendered by such technologies. ...

The second half of the [second] report recalled the applicable equality framework contained in international human rights law and urged States and non-State actors to use this framework to guide action against the glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism, and related practices. ... the Special Rapporteur emphasised the importance of collecting reliable disaggregated data and statistics on racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic crimes. The COVID-19 pandemic had continued to contribute to anti-Semitic, racist, and xenophobic hate speech, conspiracies, and public rhetoric. There had been a recent global resurgence in anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic violence and the Special Rapporteur urged States to seriously consider how to combat increasing expressions of such intolerance in their COVID-19 responses and recovery plans. ...

Some speakers said the use of digital technologies for racial profiling and segregation was symptomatic of long-standing xenophobia and racism, and echoed the Special Rapporteur’s concerns regarding discrimination against Muslims on social media. ...

Another speaker said that racist speech, anti-Semitism, incitement to violence and xenophobic notions had to be combatted. ...

General Debate on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance, Follow-up to and Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Some speakers said that anti-Semitism was not a thing of the past; the venom still existed

in the midst of societies and continued to blight the world. COVID-19 had diverted attention from anti-Semitism and tackling it. Anti-Semitism was unacceptable as it threatened and fractured inclusive societies. ...

One speaker said that online hate speech should no longer be normalised and treated with impunity and encouraged accountability for perpetrators. Education was once again suggested as a method to help educate people on racism and fighting it. COVID-19 had exacerbated exclusion and migrants were subjected to all forms of racism ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27599&LangID=E>

Racial and Xenophobic discrimination and the use of digital technologies in border and immigration enforcement

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session48/Documents/A_HRC_48_76_AdvanceUnEditedVersion.docx

Combating glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and other practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session48/Documents/A_HRC_48_77_AdvanceEditedVersion.docx

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Education (16 to 19 Academies) (Religious Character) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2946>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

Nationality and Borders Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

The Scottish Government's international work (closing date 29 October 2021)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cteea/international-engagement-external-affairs/>

Labelling for Animal Welfare (closing date 6 December 2021)

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/animal-welfare-market-interventions-and-labelling/labelling-for-animal-welfare/>

Proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally ill Adults (Scotland) Bill (closing date 22 December 2021)

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/proposals-for-bills/proposed-assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill>

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