Home Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Hamas

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL4426] To ask Her Majesty’s Government what new evidence they used to inform their decision to list Hamas as a terrorist organisation.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The Government cannot comment on specific intelligence matters.

It has been longstanding policy to keep the list of proscribed organisations under review. Hamas’ listing has been extended to cover the totality of the organisation, following an assessment that the distinction between the military and political wings is artificial and that Hamas is currently concerned in terrorism. Full details can be found at the Explanatory Memorandum to the Order on the legislation.gov.uk website.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-11-25/hl4426

The Order and Explanatory Memorandum referred to above can be read at

Israel

See also Lords written answer HL4426 “Hamas” included in the Home Affairs Section above.

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat) [86048] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether (a) she and (b) officials in her
Department have made representations to their Israeli counterparts on encouraging that country to implement the 2019 recommendations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that it ensure equal treatment for all persons on the territories under its effective control and subject to its jurisdiction.

James Cleverly: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a human rights priority for the FCDO. Human Rights is a crucial element underpinning the UK's foreign policy. This is why we regularly raise concerns with the Government of Israel, where they exist. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-02/86048

Israel: Palestinians

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat) [86049] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what estimate her Department has made of the number of (a) instances of violence against Palestinians by Israeli settlers between 1 September and 30 November 2021, (b) investigations opened into those instances of violence by Israeli authorities and (c) prosecutions for those acts.

James Cleverly: The UK regularly raises the issue of settler violence with the Government of Israel, most recently with Israel's Ministry of Defence on 19 October. We welcome Israeli authorities' discussion of how to address this issue, and urge Israel to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-02/86049

Palestinians: Health Services

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [85212] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report by Medical Aid for Palestinians entitled Systematic Discrimination and Fragmentation as Key Barriers to Palestinian Health, published on 29 November 2021, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of the findings of that report.

James Cleverly: We are aware of the report and are reviewing its findings. The UK remains firmly committed to ensuring access to essential healthcare services for all Palestinians. We are a longstanding supporter to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides core services, including healthcare to Palestinian refugees in Gaza. The UK Embassy in Tel Aviv regularly raises the importance of access to healthcare with the Israeli authorities.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-01/85212

The report referred to above can be read at

Israel: Palestinians

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [85213] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights titled Ensuring accountability and justice for violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, dated 12 June 2017, what diplomatic steps the Government has taken to encourage Israel to enact the 550 recommendations made to it by the Human Rights Council mechanisms between 2009-2018.

James Cleverly: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a human rights priority for the FCDO. The UK continues to engage with the Israeli government on human rights issues in the context of the occupation. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with
Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation, including the treatment of Palestinians.  
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-01/85213

The report referred to above can be read at  

Gaza: Demonstrations

Andy Slaughter (Labour) [85214] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 9 June 2020 to Question 57198 on Gaza: Demonstrations, what recent assessment her Department has made of the progress made by Israel in (a) investigating and (b) holding wrongdoers accountable for potentially unlawful killings by its forces in the context of the 2018-19 Gaza protests.

James Cleverly: The UK has repeatedly made clear to Israel our longstanding concerns about the manner in which the Israel Defence Forces police non-violent protests and the border areas, including use of live ammunition. We will continue to do so. The UK supports an investigation which establishes the facts about the violence that occurred during the Great March of Return in Gaza. Given the importance of accountability, we urge that any investigation be independent and transparent, that its findings be made public, and, if wrongdoing is found, that those responsible be held to account. The UK continues to monitor progress of ongoing investigations by the Israeli authorities.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-01/85214

The answer referred to above can be read at  
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2020-06-09/57198

House of Lords Oral Answers

UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (Crossbench): To ask Her Majesty’s Government what the United Kingdom’s contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) is in the current year and next year; and what steps they are taking to ensure that UNRWA does not run out of funds.

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon): My Lords, the United Kingdom is a long-term supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency—UNRWA. So far in 2021 we have provided £27.9 million to UNRWA, although final figures will be published in the annual statistics for international development report. This includes an additional £1 million that I can announce today for UNRWA’s flash appeal following the Gaza conflict, taking our total contribution to the appeal to £4.2 million. We are also working with UNRWA to improve its financial viability.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: My Lords, I thank the Minister for his Answer, perhaps more for its tone than its substance. Could he confirm that the figure he gave for 2020-21 contrasts with the figure of £70 million in 2018; that is, a cut of something in the region of 60%? Does he also agree that UNWRA’s work is more valuable and more vital in a period such as now when there are no talks going on about resolving the Israel/Palestine dispute? Do not the two things contrast rather sharply?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, on the noble Lord’s second point about talks, I take encouragement that recently, for the first time in many years, President Herzog and President Abbas have spoken, which is a positive. On UNRWA, the noble Lord is correct. The budget has reduced, but nevertheless the funding I stated
continues to provide important support, particularly in education for more than 500,000 children, half of whom are girls, within the Palestinian territories.

**Lord Collins of Highbury (Labour):** My Lords, I shall just pick up that last point about talks. Last month, at the UN International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, the UN Secretary-General remarked that it is 30 years since the historic Madrid peace conference. He also underlined the ongoing commitment of the UN to work with both sides and with the Middle East quartet. Can the Minister tell us a little more about what we are doing as a country to initiate, facilitate and support our allies in ensuring that talks commence?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, as the noble Lord will be aware, the US is taking a particular lead on these issues and positive initiatives have been undertaken by the new Administration in Washington, which we support. We work very closely with the Israelis and the Palestinian Authority on a wide range of initiatives underlining our continued strong support for a two-state solution. More recently, we have been encouraged by positive steps taken by the new Government of Israel, including engagement with Jordan, which will be a key partner in any future peace agreement. I agree with the noble Lord that this challenge—this issue, this dispute—has gone on for far too long and that we need a resolution.

**Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat):** I met the Commissioner-General of UNRWA on his recent visit to London and have visited two UNRWA facilities. Young people from the Shatila camp in Lebanon came to meet me because on the day that I was going to visit that camp there was a flash security alert about my visit. That shows the tense nature of these young people who continue to live in these camps. The 60% reduction of UK support is not only morally shameful given our historical obligations, but I saw schoolrooms with books, teaching staff, computers and other facilities funded by the UK. That 60% reduction will have a direct impact on those young people, removing life chances in a very vulnerable area. UNRWA has asked for an exceptional prioritisation mechanism from the UK FCDO. Will the Minister please consider that, because these cuts could be very dangerous?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, I have already acknowledged that there has been a reduction which reflects the reduction in the overall ODA spend. Notwithstanding that, on Gaza specifically the United Kingdom has sought to provide support and the £3.4 million has been enhanced with the additional £1 million that I have announced. Of course, I take note of the noble Lord’s insight from visiting camps and meeting people directly. I will certainly take back his suggestion to the FCDO.

**Lord Polak (Conservative):** My Lords, I refer the House to my interests in the register. Some noble Lords call for unwavering financial support for UNRWA by the British people, but what part of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency should be engaged in teaching hate and encouraging jihad, violence and martyrdom—paid for by the British people? I urge my noble friend the Minister to talk to his colleagues in Canada, Australia and the US about total restructuring and reform that offers relief and work, as opposed to incitement and hatred.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, my noble friend will be fully aware of my views on that. No British money should be spent on any textbook or support for any institution or organisation that suggests or inflicts that kind of extremist ideology on any community or any child anywhere in the world. I assure him that, in our support for UNRWA, we are vigilant on these issues. I am cognisant of reports that have been produced in this regard, and we have completed a full audit to ensure that the facilities we support are fully consistent with not just our values but those of the UN.

**Lord Grocott (Labour):** … How much longer must the people of the Occupied Territories suffer and be humiliated, in the way that they have for so many years, before the international community and the British Government in particular start taking some positive steps? How is it credible to continue to argue for a two-state solution when we recognise
just one of the two states? Is it not high time that we at least recognised the state of Palestine?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** … I share the point that he raises: as I said in an earlier answer, this has gone on for far too long; from both an Israeli and a Palestinian perspective, this needs resolution. I have been to Israel and the Palestinian territories. I have seen for myself the impact the conflict has on both communities. It requires peace negotiations to start again. We are encouraged by recent steps that the US has taken. The position has not changed on recognition of a Palestinian state: we will do so at a time when it serves the peace process in the best way. At the same time, we continue to support and work with the Palestinian Authority. For example, it was invited to, and attended, COP 26 recently.

**Baroness Deech (Crossbench):** My Lords, the West has supported UNRWA financially for more than 70 years, contributing tens of billions of dollars towards not solving the refugee problem but perpetuating it. Is it not time that UNRWA’s functions were transferred to the United Nations refugee council and the Palestinian Authority for the proper treatment of refugees and their resettlement and advancement? UNRWA is a failure.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, the noble Baroness raises specific issues about UNRWA. As I said in my original Answer, the UK continues to support UNRWA but, as I have indicated, where concerns are raised about any UN agency it is right that the United Kingdom, as both a funder and a supporter of the multilateral system, ensures that this work is carried out effectively. I assure the noble Baroness that this is exactly what we do. As I reiterated earlier, UNRWA currently carries out some very valuable work, including on the education of young children.

**Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated):** My Lords, UNRWA was founded in 1948 to help 700,000 refugees but now provides aid for more than 5 million. Uniquely, UNRWA status—unlike that of any other refugees anywhere in the world—is passed down through the generations. Should we not encourage UNRWA to press Lebanon, Jordan and the other countries to give these refugees citizenship and full rights, instead of perpetuating the so-called right of return that prolongs the conflict and undermines the policy of a two-state solution?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, the noble Lord is quite right: UNRWA was set up under a unique mandate by the UN General Assembly to provide protection and core services to Palestinian refugees across the Middle East. We are clear that the final status of the Palestinian refugees must be agreed as part of the wider peace negotiations. Until that time, the UK remains firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and Palestinian refugees. I note his point about other countries, and we are supporting Palestinian refugees in those countries as well.

**Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (Liberal Democrat):** My Lords, is the Minister aware that there are persistent allegations of increased violence towards Palestinians by settlers illegally occupying lands on the West Bank? What representations have Her Majesty’s Government made to the Government of Israel on this matter?

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** My Lords, we consistently make representations on the issue of settler violence in the Palestinian territories. I assure the noble Lord that we work closely with Israel on security issues as well. For example, we very much encourage recent announcements from the new Israeli Government on the added support they are giving, in terms of both economic prosperity and security, for the Arab community in Israel. Israel is a key partner for the UK. That means that, as a friend and partner, where we have issues of concern we raise them directly.

[Link to Hansard](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-12-09/debates/DF783DBD-B355-43A0-9B6E-ABF61B7C9CAA/UNReliefAndWorksAgencyForPalestinianRefugees)
James Cleverly Tech can play a vital part in improving women’s safety on public transport. In Israel, @UKinIsrael is working with @MeravMichaeli, [British (flag)] and [Israeli (flag)] policymakers, entrepreneurs & NGOs to discuss innovative solutions to a [worldwide (emoji)] problem. #16Days
https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1469035444771995648

James Cleverly My colleague @tariqahmadbt today announced in @UKHouseofLords an additional £1m from UK to @UNRWA to support ongoing needs in Gaza. With the situation in Gaza still fragile, the UK supports @UNRWA as a vital provider of services to Palestinian refugees in need.
https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1469006995525185544

Quotes:
Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon Today I reiterated strong UK support for @UNRWA and their work to support regional stability. I was delighted to announce an additional £1m in UK aid to UNRWA’s appeal to support vulnerable Palestinian refugees in Gaza.
https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1468911477583134724

Other Relevant Information

CST and Antisemitism Policy Trust

New UK report estimates almost half a million explicitly antisemitic tweets per year
... Woolf Institute analysis concludes there are between 100 and 1,350 explicitly antisemitic tweets every day in the UK. The findings estimate that there are up to 495,000 explicitly antisemitic tweets per year made viewable for UK users (tweets in English by and available to UK users). Given the size of the UK’s Jewish population at around 290,000 people, the report calculates there to be nearly two antisemitic tweets annually for every Jewish person in the UK. ...
Danny Stone MBE, Chief Executive, Antisemitism Policy Trust, says: “Policies to deal with online abuse aren't worth the paper they're written on if companies cannot effectively enforce them. This new report makes it crystal clear that Twitter's systems for discovering and acting against anti-Jewish racism still aren't good enough. As the Government considers new internet safety laws, I hope this report will weigh heavily on Minister's minds.”
Dr. Dave Rich, Director of Policy, Community Security Trust, says: “It has long been known that social media is the engine of modern antisemitism, and it increasingly features in the antisemitic incidents that are reported to CST. This new research not only demonstrates how widespread this is, but also shows exactly how the social media companies are failing to control the problem of anti-Jewish hatred on their platforms.” ...
To read the full press release see

Twitter: The extent and nature of antisemitism on Twitter in the UK
**Relevant Legislation**
**new or updated today**

**UK Parliament**

- Animal Welfare (Sentence) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867)

- Assisted Dying Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875)

- Charities Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877)

- Education (Assemblies) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878)

- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862)

- Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025)

- Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017)

- Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900)

- Nationality and Borders Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023)

- Online Safety Bill (Draft)

- Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill
  [https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942)

**Northern Ireland Assembly**

- Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill
**Consultations**  **new or updated today**

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

- **Animal Welfare – revision of EU legislation (Food Safety)** (closing date 21 January 2022)

- **Marriage Law (Northern Ireland)** (closing date 18 February 2022)

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