



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

Downing Street

Ministerial Appointments: September 2022

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministerial-appointments-september-2022>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Oral Answers

Israeli Government Proscription of Palestinian Civil Society Groups

Alex Cunningham (Labour): Whether she has had recent discussions with her Israeli counterpart on the Israeli Government's proscription of Palestinian civil society groups. (901313)

The Minister for Asia and the Middle East (Amanda Milling): We have been clear about our concern over the Israeli Government's decision in October 2021 to designate six Palestinian non-governmental organisations as terrorist organisations, and the subsequent raids on seven NGOs. We continue to engage with a number of these organisations and have raised the issue with the Israeli authorities, including, most recently, through our ambassador to Israel.

Alex Cunningham: I am grateful to the Minister for her comments. What assessment has she made of the impact of the listing and raids of Palestinian civic society and human rights groups on the prospect of that much-wanted and much-needed two-state solution and an enduring peace for Palestinians and Israelis?

Amanda Milling: Civil society organisations play a really important role in upholding human rights and democracy. They must be able to operate freely in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. During my recent visit to Israel and the OPTs in June, I met human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organisations to discuss the pressures that they face in the region. I emphasise the UK's strong

support for freedom of speech and media freedom. ...

Bambos Charalambous (Labour): Last October, Israel designated six Palestinian civil society groups as terrorist organisations, which has caused widespread concern. Accusations of terrorism must be treated with the utmost seriousness and must be grounded in evidence. As *The Guardian* reported in August, the CIA, which is known to be assiduous in these matters, said that no evidence had been presented to support the designation. Will the Minister press her Israeli counterpart for that evidence and, in the absence of such evidence, continue to support the Palestinian civil society that is so important to democracy and the goal of a two-state solution?

Amanda Milling: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, as I just said, on the importance of civil society and the role it plays in terms of human rights and democracy. The evidence that forms the basis of the designations is a matter for the Government of Israel. The UK maintains its own criteria for designation, and we continue to engage with many of those organisations. As I said, we have been clear about our concerns.

Robert Halfon (Conservative): With Iran stepping up its terrorist activities in the middle east, supporting terrorist organisations carrying out attacks against Israel and developing its nuclear capacity, what plans does my right hon. Friend have to introduce sanctions against Iran and take up further punitive measures?

Amanda Milling: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his question. I am afraid that I will not be able to talk about future sanction designations on the Floor of the House as that would undermine their role.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-09-06/debates/F3E1D818-BE64-4513-9777-A2A4C9959098/IsraeliGovernmentProscriptionOfPalestinianCivilSocietyGroups>

The Guardian report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/22/cia-report-israel-palestinian-rights-groups>

Iran

John Spellar (Labour): What steps her Department plans to take to counter Iran's destabilising use of proxies in the middle east. (901301)

The Minister for Asia and the Middle East (Amanda Milling): ... The UK maintains a range of sanctions to constrain Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps malign activity. Maritime interdictions in January and February 2022 led to the seizure of advanced conventional weapons travelling from Iran to the Houthis in Yemen. We support the strengthening of state institutions in Iraq and Lebanon, and work to end the conflict in Yemen and Syria.

John Spellar: Mr Speaker, you may recall that it was against considerable Whitehall resistance—it needed pressure from this House—that we got the Government to ban Hezbollah. I hope that the Minister will be more receptive to recognising that the IRGC is at the heart of destabilising proxy wars across the middle east and further afield, and that she will show more urgency in joining our allies in the United States in proscribing the IRGC.

Amanda Milling: The UK maintains a range of sanctions that work to constrain the destabilising activity of the IRGC. The list of proscribed organisations is kept under constant review, but we do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is under consideration for proscription.

Michael Fabricant (Conservative): The hostility with Iran has caused even greater friendship between the adjoining Arab countries and the state of Israel, so is not now the time to follow the US and some other countries by moving the British embassy from Tel Aviv to the capital of Israel, where its Parliament is, Jerusalem?

Amanda Milling: My hon. Friend is right to say that the UK and Israel share a thriving relationship, working together on bilateral priorities, as well as on regional issues of mutual concern. The British embassy in Israel is in Tel Aviv. I am

aware of the possibility of a review but will not speculate further on this point.

John Cryer (Labour): When we are talking about the people in power in Tehran and their proxies around the world, whom my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar) mentioned, we are talking about clerical fascists, who would probably have been on the same side as the Nazis if they had been around 80 years ago. Why can we not just get on with it and ban the IRGC, as we banned Hezbollah?

Amanda Milling: I have been clear in response to earlier questions on the IRGC and the range of sanctions to constrain its destabilising activity. I will not comment further on the possibility of proscription of this group.

Stephen Crabb (Conservative): It is a mistake for the west to regard Iran's sponsorship of proxies as somehow being a non-strategic irritant, as there is a continuous thread that links its sponsorship of terror with its ballistics programme and its march towards acquiring nuclear weapons capability. So does my right hon. Friend agree that we should not repeat the mistakes of the past and that any revised nuclear deal with Iran should be accompanied by very strong measures to discourage it from being the world's largest sponsor of terrorism?

Amanda Milling: We have real concerns about the instability that Iran causes in the region. Its nuclear programme is today more advanced than ever. There is an offer on the table and Iran should take it urgently—time is running out and there will not be a better one. If this deal is not struck, and soon, the joint comprehensive plan of action will collapse. In that scenario, we will have to consider carefully the options with partners and allies.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-09-06/debates/EAFDFCB8-1C30-457E-8892-125B09B15C36/Iran>

House of Commons Written Answers

Israel: Foreign Relations

Michael Fabricant (Conservative) [901325] When [the Minister] next plans to meet her counterpart in the government of Israel.

Amanda Milling: The UK and Israel share a thriving relationship, working together on bilateral priorities, as well as regional issues of mutual concern, including the Middle East Peace Process. I last met my Israeli counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Roll, during my visit to Israel in June.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-09-06/901325>

Trade Agreements: Israel

David Jones (Conservative) [41956] To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, whether her Department is taking steps to help ensure that the interests of Palestinians are reflected in the negotiations for the free trade agreement with Israel.

Ranil Jayawardena: Palestinian goods imported from the Occupied Palestinian Territories benefit from the trade preferences outlined in the bilateral agreement negotiated between the United Kingdom and the Palestinian Authority, which came into force on 1st January 2021. While the focus of these negotiations is trade with the State of Israel, we value our bilateral trade relationship with the Palestinian Authority too, and will continue to build upon our commercial links through our bilateral agreement.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-07-21/41956>

Israel: Palestinians

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [42316] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations officials in her

Department have made to the Israeli Government on reports of destruction of homes and farms in Masafer Yatta.

Amanda Milling: We are aware of the decision by the Israeli Supreme Court on the Masafer Yatta eviction case and are monitoring the situation closely. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law.

I met with Palestinian families affected by the ongoing demolition and eviction orders at Masafer Yatta during my recent visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and raised our concerns with Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Roll on 22 June.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-07-21/42316>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Bill of Rights Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227>

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325>

**** Online Safety Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0121/amend/onlinesafety_rm_rep_0907.pdf

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217>

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163>

Schools Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

TOP

Consultations

** new or updated today

Equality Evidence Strategy 2023-25 (closing date 23 September 2022)

<https://tinyurl.com/mpunv6cw>

Increasing the use of mediation in the civil justice system (closing date 4 October 2022)

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/dispute-resolution/increasing-the-use-of-mediation/>

TOP

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