



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Scottish Parliament Written Answer

Islamophobia

Foysoil Choudhury (Labour) [S6W-09623] To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made towards agreeing terms of reference for its Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group, and what action it is taking to protect Muslim communities in Scotland from Islamophobic incidents until its new hate crime strategy is in place.

Christina McKelvie: The Scottish Government is clear that hate crime and prejudice, including Islamophobia, will not be tolerated.

Our new Hate Crime Strategy will set out our priorities for tackling hate crime in Scotland and will support implementation of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

Hate crime legislation sends a message to victims, perpetrators and wider society that hate crime is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Once in force the Act will build on and strengthen existing protections, including through the creation of new stirring up of hatred offences that will apply to all listed characteristics, including religion.

The Ministerial led Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group has been established to take this work forward and brings together a range of public and third sector partners. The Terms of Reference have been agreed and published on the Scottish Government's website: [The Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group](#).

We continue to engage with Muslim communities across Scotland as we develop the strategy which will consider how we best tackle Islamophobia in Scotland, including whether a definition of Islamophobia would be helpful.

Tackling hate crime remains a priority and we encourage anyone who has experienced or witnessed a hate crime to report it to Police Scotland or through a third party reporting centre.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/written-questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-09623>

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Israel

Downing Street

PM call with Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid

The Prime Minister ... began by congratulating Prime Minister Lapid on his appointment as Prime Minister earlier this month. Prime Minister Lapid thanked the Prime Minister for his ongoing efforts to support the UK-Israel relationship, an international partnership that he said had made enormous progress during the Prime Minister's tenure.

The leaders agreed that ongoing work, including the recent announcement that the UK and Israel have begun negotiations on a new Free Trade Agreement, will take the cooperation between our countries to new heights. ...

On the brutality in Ukraine, the leaders both underscored their support for the Ukrainian people. The Prime Minister welcomed Israel's humanitarian efforts in Ukraine, including their provision of field hospitals. ...

The Prime Minister and Prime Minister Lapid also discussed Iran and agreed on the need to prevent Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon. ...

The Prime Minister concluded the call by saying he will always be a big friend and supporter of both Israel and Prime Minister Lapid.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-call-with-israeli-prime-minister-yair-lapid-26-july-2022>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Palestinians and Israelis deserve equal measures of peace, security and prosperity: Statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the UN Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East

... We welcome Israel's commitment during this visit to restart the Joint Economic Committee and accelerate transition to 4G in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These are important steps that have the potential to bolster the Palestinian economy. ... the UK stands ready to provide support.

Recent direct discussions between Prime Minister Lapid, President Herzog and Defence Minister Gantz, and President Abbas and other PA leaders, are similarly welcome. Such cooperation and dialogue are essential to tackling shared challenges.

However, the situation on the ground remains fragile. We note, with concern, UN OHCHR's report on the increase in fatalities. In the first six months of 2022, 60 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces during law enforcement operations in the West Bank. In the same period, 19 Israelis were killed in terror attacks. Terrorist attacks against civilians are abhorrent and unacceptable. We call on all parties to de-escalate tensions and stop the continued loss of life.

We welcome US engagement with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to seek the truth surrounding Shireen Abu Aqleh's death, and we now urge accountability for those responsible.

We continue to be deeply concerned about the imminent risk of forcible transfer of over 1000 Palestinians at Masafer Yatta and recent detention of staff of humanitarian organisations seeking to aid the community.

This month we saw the disbandment of the community at Ras al Tin, following the demolition of their homes and settler attacks. We urge Israel to abide by its obligations under international law to ensure the residents of Masafer Yatta, and other communities in Area C, are protected, that humanitarian access is permitted and to refrain from further evictions and demolitions.

We also call on Israel to halt plans to progress 1900 settlement units in East Jerusalem on 25 July. Settlements are illegal under international law and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution.

The UK believes that Palestinians and Israelis deserve equal measures of peace, security and prosperity. A negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, remains the best means of achieving that outcome.

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/palestinians-and-israelis-deserve-equal-measures-of-peace-security-and-prosperity>

United Nations

Addressing Israeli-Palestinian Tensions as They Arise Cannot Replace Efforts to Resolve Core Issues, Deputy Special Coordinator Tells Security Council

... **Lynn Hastings, Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process**, briefed the Council that, while the specific developments of the conflict fluctuate, “the structural reality has not changed”. Concerning levels of violence against civilians continue to exacerbate mistrust and undermine a peaceful resolution and, for years, illegal settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank has been steadily shrinking the land available to Palestinians for development and livelihoods. Further, 399 demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures in 2022 have left over 400 Palestinians displaced. “There is a growing sense of hopelessness among many Palestinians who see their prospects for statehood, sovereignty and a peaceful future slipping away,” she said, noting that many Israelis “also understand the perils of continuing along the current path”. ...

Detailing daily violence throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the reporting period, she also pointed out that settler-related violence has continued ... She recalled that, on 20-21 July, thousands of Israelis participated in a widely publicized campaign to establish settlement outposts across the West Bank and that, in advance of the campaign, Israeli authorities stated such activity is illegal. On 21 July, Israeli security forces removed the seven makeshift encampments, and she welcomed the statements and actions by the Government of Israel to prevent the establishment of new outposts. ...

Turning to Gaza, she said that the situation remains fragile, as efforts by the United Nations and other partners continue to deliver vital humanitarian and development assistance. However, soaring commodity prices continue to negatively impact Palestinian lives across the Occupied Palestinian Territory ... While mounting tensions must be addressed, there is no substitute for a legitimate political process that will resolve the core issues driving the conflict. ...

Riyad Mansour, Permanent Observer for the State of Palestine, said ... The Secretary-General has warned that a repeat of Israeli violations similar to those during May 2021 would lead to listing Israel among the violators of child rights. That was not a one-time event, however, but a persisting pattern across the years of abject disregard for the lives and rights of Palestinian children. ... It is the story of entire families buried under the rubble of their homes, and “over 2 million people trapped by a medieval blockade”, he said — with an oppressor claiming a right to oppress the people and steal the land. “What future for Palestine? What future for Palestinians?” he asked. From the day they are born, Palestinians are acutely aware that they have no control over their lives; that a settler or a soldier has been endowed with a right to take away their life, while enjoying blanket immunity. Whatever happens, the Palestinian will be deemed guilty and the Israeli will be deemed innocent in Israeli courts; the world too accustomed to this pattern of tragedy and injustice will express dismay then look away.

At a time when the international community rightfully proclaims Palestinians are entitled to equal measures of freedom, security and prosperity, Israel persists in denying all three ... “I know everybody around this table and beyond wants peace,” he affirmed. “The only question that remains is: are they ready to do what is necessary to achieve it?”

Gilad Erdan (Israel) said the biggest threat to the Middle East is the nuclearization of the radical Ayatollah regime in Iran, as well as its terror funding and hegemonic ambitions — threats that are almost never discussed in the Council. ... Highlighting the primary obstacles to peace, he pointed to the Palestinians’ absurd prerequisite that Israel accepts all their radical demands, even before sitting at the table. He noted that the endless incitement to terror stems even from the highest offices of the Palestinian authorities, adding that President Mahmoud Abbas pays hundreds of millions of dollars to terrorists. Despite the heinous actions of Hamas, the Council remains silent, he said, urging its members, on behalf of a father whose son with special needs has been taken hostage by the group, to take action. ...

Pointing to Israel’s cooperation with the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan, he highlighted new initiatives on energy, health care and transportation, among others, adding that Palestinians can also benefit from those gains and collaborative projects if they place the well-being of their people over the breeding of hatred and incitement against Israelis. It is time for the Council to take action against Iran, its nuclear programme and its proxies, he stressed, adding that Hezbollah and Lebanon must no longer “get a free pass”. ...

Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States), updating the Council on the recent visit of President Biden to Israel and the West Bank ... said the visit showed the United States’ steadfast commitment to Israel’s security and its determination to bolster its relationship with Palestine ... She said that normalization agreements between countries in the region are important to advance peace between Israel and Palestine and address the needs of the Palestinian people. Yet they are not a substitute for a negotiated two-State solution. ...

Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) said in the first six months of 2022, 60 Palestinians were killed and more than 5,900 injured by Israeli Security Forces, voicing concern over the pervasive culture of impunity for incidents of possible excessive use of force — or even potentially unlawful killings — by these forces. An independent investigation into the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh remains essential. She strongly condemned settler violence and other ideologically motivated violence, describing efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice as “extremely limited”. ... Emphasizing that Israel’s settlement activity gravely undermines the prospects of a two-State solution, she said immediate action is required to preserve the viability of this goal. ...

Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom) ... [called] on all parties to de-escalate tension and stop the continued loss of life. Voicing concern about the imminent risk of forcible transfer of over 1,000 Palestinians at Masafer Yatta and the recent detention of staff of humanitarian organizations seeking to aid the community, she urged Israel to abide by its obligations under international law to ensure the residents of Masafer Yatta and other communities in Area C are protected, humanitarian access is permitted and to refrain from further evictions and demolitions. She also called on Israel to halt plans to advance 1,900 settlement units in East Jerusalem ... noting that settlements are illegal under international law and threaten the physical viability of a two-State solution. [[click here](#) to read this speech in more detail]

Nathalie Broadhurst (France) said the two-State solution, with Jerusalem as the shared capital, is the only formula that meets the legitimate aspirations of both peoples, upholds Israel’s security interests and the stability of the region. ... While noting Israel’s announcement to ease restrictions on the movement of Palestinians, she condemned plans to extend or create settlements ... Calling for resumed direct political dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, she welcomed the most recent call between Prime Minister Yair Lapid and President Mahmoud Abbas. ...

Dmitry Polyanskiy (Russian Federation), noting that the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict triggers frequent outbreaks of violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and undermines regional security, said that the stagnated peace process — compounded by provocative one-sided measures — is liable to result in a “conflagration”. Further, Israel’s settlement and expansion continues to entrench occupation on the west bank of the Jordan river, despite these attempts to create outposts being illegitimate even under Israeli legislation. Against a backdrop of impunity for crimes against the Palestinian people, he underscored the need to strengthen international consensus on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue on the basis of a two-State solution. ...

Zahra Ershadi (Iran) said the situation in occupied Palestine remains dire, as the Israeli regime’s brutality and systematic violations of human rights continue unabated, with settlements continuing in blatant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. She cited the recent assassination of Shireen Abu Akleh, in line with Israel’s well-documented campaign of harassment and violence against journalists, as well as the murder of 86 Palestinian children and imprisoning of 637 more in 2021. ... She further cited the Israeli representative’s abuse of the forum with false accusations against her country, all of which are categorically rejected — and intended to distract attention from the continuous atrocities and violation of international law. Weapons of mass destruction in the hands of the Israeli regime endanger the entire region, as it has even threatened nuclear annihilation of some States and refused to adhere to any weapons of mass destruction disarmament or control regimes ...

Sudqi Atallah Abd Alkadetr Al Omoush (Jordan) said that there can be no security, stability or prosperity in the region without a solution that guarantees the building of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. ... he underscored the need to respect the legal and historic status of Jerusalem and holy sites. As the occupying Power, Israel bears responsibility for what happens in that city, and he expressed concern over continued disregard for the status of holy sites in Jerusalem — particularly that of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which is under Jordanian custodianship. Reiterating that the Islamic Waqf administration – Department of the Jerusalem Awqaf and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs — is the only administration that has international power and authority over the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, he stressed that Israel, to preserve calm, must respect the historic status of the compound and other sites. ...

Thibault Camelli, of the European Union ... voiced concern over illegal settlement expansion in the West Bank, violence against civilians committed by all parties, terror attacks and increasing demolitions and evictions, which severely threaten the two-State solution. ... he called for an investigation into the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while covering an Israeli security operation in the occupied West Bank. He called for a halt to illegal settlement building, as well as upholding the 1967 status quo for the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif ...

Arrmanatha C. Nasir, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, said Israel’s settlement expansion and land confiscation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, constitute grave breaches of international law and United Nations resolutions. ... The Council must clearly and firmly reiterate its demands that Israel immediately end all settlement expansions, demolitions, confiscations of Palestinian property and the forcible removal of civilians, in compliance with international law and United Nations resolutions ... He condemned the indiscriminate killing and excessive use of lethal force against civilians, particularly children, which are all too frequent and for which no one is held accountable. ...

Gabriele Caccia, Permanent Observer for the Holy See, recalling the death of Shireen Abu Akleh, a Catholic journalist killed in the exercise of her profession in Jenin, condemned the behaviour of the Israeli police during the events that occurred at the Catholic Hospital of Saint Joseph in Jerusalem before her funeral. Regarding the heightened tensions around the holy places in Jerusalem, he appealed to all parties to maintain the historic

status quo within the holy city and rejected any unilateral measures aimed at changing it, including attempts to alter its multicultural and multireligious character, “which is dear to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike”. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14981.doc.htm>

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Foreign Affairs

House of Lords Written Answer

Religious Freedom

The Lord Bishop of Manchester [HL1741] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the outcomes of the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief on 5 to 6 July; and what steps they are taking, if any, to review their strategy on freedom of religion or belief following that Conference.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) hosted by the UK brought together governments, faith and belief leaders and civil society for discussions to address challenges to the enjoyment of the right to FoRB, and had positive outcomes. The Conference gave a platform to those persecuted for their religion or belief. Forty-seven governments, international organisations and other entities pledged action in support of FoRB. Thirty four countries joined the UK in signing up to a set of statements found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/international-ministerial-conference-on-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-2022-conference-statements>

The Foreign Secretary outlined FCDO progress in implementing recommendations from the Bishop of Truro's report and noted the breadth of religion and belief groups that suffer from persecution. I [Lord Ahmad] announced new UK funding for support for defenders of FoRB, as well as funding and expertise for countries prepared to make legislative changes to protect FoRB.

Following the Conference, the UK Government remains committed to defending FoRB for all, and promoting respect between different religious and non-religious communities. Promoting the right to FoRB is one of the UK's longstanding human rights priorities, and as other human rights are, FoRB will continue to be considered in relevant Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office external and internal thematic or country strategies.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-07-13/hl1741>

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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>

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>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Standards for ethnicity data (closing date 30 August 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/standards-for-ethnicity-data>

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/>

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