Political Affairs Digest
A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Israel

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is extremely alarmed by increasing settler violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: UK statement at the Security Council

... The UK is extremely alarmed by the growth of settler violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. So far in 2023, UN agencies have recorded 591 settler-related incidents resulting in Palestinian casualties, property damage or both. That is the highest monthly average of incidents since records began. This includes the murder of Palestinian Qusai Jamal Maatan by settlers, which the UK condemns.

The displacement of over 400 Palestinians across seven communities from their land due to ongoing settler violence is unacceptable. As an occupying power, Israel is obliged under international humanitarian law to properly provide security for the local population. Israeli authorities must do more to hold to account and prevent those who have made the lives of Palestinians – such as in the communities of Al Qaboun and Al Mughayyir – intolerable. This includes thoroughly investigating every instance of settler violence to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity.

The UK condemns the abhorrent terrorist attacks in Tel Aviv on Saturday 12 August, the West Bank town of Huwara on 19 August, and the South Hebron hills just today. These attacks have taken the lives of a further four innocent Israelis. The Palestinian Authority must tackle terrorism and incitement.

We also see continued violations of international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including evictions and demolitions. On Friday 17 August, Israel demolished a West Bank Protection Consortium school in Ein Samiya. The continued demolition of Palestinian property and the evictions by Israeli authorities from their homes are contrary to international humanitarian law, it renders Palestinians at risk of forcible transfer, and causes unnecessary suffering to ordinary Palestinians. This is harmful to the peace process. Israel must also urgently provide a clear, transparent route to construction for Palestinians in Area C.

President, UNRWA faces a deep funding crisis. UNRWA can only be a stabilising force in the region whilst it is able to deliver vital services to the Palestinian refugees. We call on
members of the council and UN member states to work collectively to fill critical funding gaps.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon  Appalled to hear of another terror attack in the West Bank town of Huwara which has killed two Israelis. The UK condemns terrorism, as well as its incitement, and calls for calm in the wake of this tragedy.
https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1692998259680120929

Scottish Government FoI Release

Scottish Government involvement with Israel and Palestine

Information Requested:
1. Has the Scottish Parliament ever discussed the never-ending conflict in Israel/Palestine?
2. If so, what was the nature of the discussion, and what decisions were taken, or motions adopted?
3. Has any Scottish town/city a 'twinning' arrangement with any town/city in Israel or Palestine? And if so, which towns/cities are involved?
4. What is the Scottish Government's position regarding the illegal occupation of Palestinian land by Israeli settlers which has been repeatedly condemned by the United Nations since the 1967 war?
5. Has the Scottish Government ever considered giving safe refuge to Palestinian refugees in the same way they have in relation to the on-going conflict in Ukraine, and if not, why not?

Response
The Scottish Government does not have the information you have asked at Qs 1 - 3, because the Scottish Government is not responsible for the subject. …

Q4. The Scottish Government continues to be very concerned about the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Scottish Government supports the EU two-state position, based on the 1967 borders, and firmly encourage both Israel and Palestine to reach a sustainable, negotiated settlement under international law, which has its foundations in mutual recognition and the determination to co-exist peacefully. It strongly encourages the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority to work with the international community to secure credible long-term peace and end the cycle of violence which continues to affect both Palestinians and Israelis.

The Scottish Government supports all credible and inclusive international diplomatic efforts to achieve peace in the region, and in our view, peace depends on there being two secure, stable and prosperous states of Israel and Palestine, living side by side and believes that any unilateral annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel would be damaging to efforts to restart peace negotiations and contrary to international law hoping that the parties return to negotiations.

The Scottish Government condemns all acts of violence and will continue to engage with both sides in the conflict to urge them to take the necessary steps towards a peaceful, two state solution. The Scottish Government agrees with others in the international community that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law; making it harder for a peaceful two state solution to be reached.

Q5. The Scottish Government has considered supporting refugees resettled to the UK from Palestine. This does not equate to a direct equivalent to support provided to people displaced from Ukraine because the support that can be provided to refugees, people
seeking asylum and displaced persons can vary depending on the status they are granted by the UK Government and any associated conditions applied under UK immigration legislation and rules. As you may be aware, under current constitutional arrangements in the UK asylum and immigration are reserved to the UK Parliament and are handled by the Home Office. The Scottish Government cannot grant visas to enable people to travel to the UK to seek asylum, resettle as refugees or be supported as displaced persons …

To read the full FoI Release see
https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202300365380/

United Nations

Detailing Extremist Violence on Both Sides of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Senior Official Tells Security Council Political Horizon Must Be Re-Established

… Tor Wennesland, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, reported that Palestinians and Israelis are killed and injured in near-daily violence — including just hours before his briefing when another fatal shooting killed an Israeli in the West Bank. “This violence is fuelled and exacerbated by a growing sense of despair about the future,” he observed. The lack of progress towards a political horizon that addresses the core issues driving the conflict has left a dangerous, volatile vacuum, filled by extremists on both sides. “We are a long distance apart from the sentiments prevailing when the Oslo Accords were signed 30 years ago,” he noted …

He called on Israeli authorities to end demolitions of Palestinian-owned property and the displacement and eviction of Palestinians, and to approve additional plans that would enable them to build legally and address their development needs. The Palestinian Authority’s fiscal state remains dire — with a projected deficit of more than $370 million for 2023 — and austerity measures have resulted in significant reductions to civil-servant salaries and social assistance. Meanwhile, funding shortages continue to curtail the ability of United Nations agencies to provide crucial services to Palestinians. …

… while the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has been “generally maintained” in the Golan, the situation remains volatile due to continued violations of the disengagement-of-forces agreement. In addition, as tensions along the Blue Line continue, he urged political leaders in Lebanon and Israel to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric. Concluding, he pointed out that Palestinian and Israeli fatalities in 2023 have already surpassed 2022’s annual figures and that settlement expansion “continues unabated”. …

Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States) … expressed deep concern for the spike in violence in the West Bank and Israel. Justice must be “pursued with equal vigour” in all cases of violent extremism, whether the perpetrators are Palestinian militants or extremist Israeli settlers, she emphasized, adding that she remained deeply concerned by the damage in the Jenin camp. … She also expressed her deep concern regarding Hizbullah’s provocations, which represent an increasing threat to Lebanon's peace and security, as well as Israel's. …

James Kariuki (United Kingdom) sounded extreme alarm over the growth of settler violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. … He also called on the Israeli authorities to thoroughly investigate every instance of settler violence to bring those responsible to justice and end the culture of impunity. He further condemned the terrorist attacks in Tel Aviv on 12 August, the West Bank town of Huwara on 19 August and the South Hebron hills on 21 August, which took the lives of four innocent Israelis. [Click here to read this speech in full]

Isis Marie Doriane Jarraud-Darnault (France), noting recent settlement decisions taken by Israeli authorities in Jerusalem, underscored that her country will never recognize the illegal annexation of territory nor the legalization of “wildcat” settlements. … As the thirtieth anniversary of the Oslo Accords approaches, the lack of progress on the ground is fuelling
Dmitry Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) said the ongoing lack of a settlement to the Palestinian problem continues to provoke “regular bloody eruption of violence” in the zone of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, creating growing threats to stability and security of the entire Middle East region. … In 2023, Israeli authorities used a simplified procedure to approve plans to build more than 12,000 housing units, accompanied by the forcible evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. He also noted that this year is becoming one of the bloodiest, with the number of Palestinian killed already exceeding more than 200, including women and minors. …

To read the full press release see

Other Relevant Information

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Interfaith dialogue is vital for building inclusive and peaceful societies free from religious hatred, OSCE human rights head says

Interfaith and interreligious dialogue is vital to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief and combat religious intolerance and violence, not just against people but also against homes, property, schools, religious sites, or places of worship … “Dialogue can be difficult, but it is nonetheless vital,” said ODIHR [Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights] Director Matteo Mecacci. “It gives an opportunity for different religious or belief communities to engage in frank but respectful conversation. This allows members of diverse communities to gain insight into each other’s beliefs, practices and values, fostering mutual tolerance and respect and countering stereotypes and prejudices that can lead to intolerance or even violence.” Hatred against people from particular religious or belief communities rarely takes place in isolation, but often goes hand in hand with other manifestations of intolerance. Violence and discrimination do not only harm the individuals and communities concerned but can also jeopardize security across the OSCE region, with tensions between religious or belief communities having the potential to transform into wider conflicts. … Later this year, ODIHR will publish a practical toolkit dedicated to interfaith and interreligious dialogue and partnerships as a means to foster dialogue and understanding between different religions and belief communities. …

To read the full press release see
https://www.osce.org/odihr/549874

Relevant Legislation  ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475
Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186

Holocaust Memorial Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325

Online Safety Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137

Nakba Commemoration Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438

Schools Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163

Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454

Scottish Parliament

Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill
Consultations ** new or updated today

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill (closing date not specified – no later than 14 September 2023 but may be earlier)

UK international development white paper (closing date 16 September 2023)

** Drug Use in Ethnic Minority Groups Review (closing date 22 September 2023)

A Human Rights Bill for Scotland (closing date 5 October 2023)

The future of population and migration statistics in England and Wales (closing date 26 October 2023)
https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/ons/futureofpopulationandmigrationstatistics/