

**Debate Pack**

CDP-0085 (2021)  
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11 June 2021

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# E-petitions relating to Israel and Palestine

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# 1

## Background

A Westminster Hall debate on e-petitions [585313](#) and [585314](#), relating to Israel and Palestine, is scheduled for Monday 14 June 2021, from 4:30-6:00pm. The debate will be led by Catherine McKinnell MP.

The text of the e-petitions is as follows:

- [E-petition 585313: UK Government to formally recognise the State of Palestine](#)

Recognise the state of Palestine to help stop the conflict from Israel. Not recognising the Palestinian state allows Israel to continue their persecution of the Palestinians.

- [E-petition 585314: Introduce sanctions against Israel](#)

The Government should introduce sanctions against Israel, including blocking all trade, and in particular arms.

Its disproportionate treatment of Palestinians and settlements that are regarded by the international community as illegal are an affront to civilised society.

## Recognition of the “State of Palestine”

Recognition is the act of one state formally or informally recognising an entity as a state. Recognition can also refer to the recognition of a government or representatives of a state as the legitimate or lawful representative of that state and its peoples.

At the United Nations, the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations<sup>1</sup> [lists the states](#) that have recognised the State of Palestine. Currently, [139 of 193 UN Member States](#) recognise this statehood.

In recent months, the UK has continued to reiterate its long-standing position that it would only recognise a State of Palestine at the right time in the peace process with Israel. In February 2021, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said that the UK would recognise a Palestinian state at a

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<sup>1</sup> This mission currently has Non-member Observer State status at the UN since 2012. See, UN General Assembly Press Release, [General Assembly votes overwhelmingly to accord Palestine 'non-member observer state' status in United Nations](#), 29 November 2012. See also, Commons Library Briefing Paper, [‘Palestinian statehood’](#), 11 August 2011; and Commons Library Briefing Paper, [“International status of Palestine”](#), 3 October 2014.

time of the Government's choosing, and when it best serves the objective of peace.<sup>2</sup>

In September 2020, the Government said:

We are clear that we want to see the creation of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian state - living in peace and security, side by side with Israel. The UK will recognise a Palestinian state at a time when it best serves the objective of peace. Bilateral recognition in itself cannot end the occupation. Without a negotiated settlement the occupation and the problems that come with it will continue. We continue to work closely with international partners strongly advocating a two-state solution and encouraging a return to meaningful negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2014, the House of Commons [voted in favour](#) of the following:

That this House believes that the Government should recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel, as a contribution to securing a negotiated two state solution.

This vote was not binding on the Government.

## Statehood as an aim of peace talks

A two-state solution for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories was the objective of a peaceful settlement highlighted in the 1993 Oslo Accords ([the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements](#)), and has been reiterated at a number of points since.

The two-state solution remains the most favoured approach to achieving peace, despite some incidents being criticised for potentially endangering this in recent years. For example, On 28 January 2020, the former US President Trump's Administration [published its peace plan](#) for the Middle East which included controversial proposals to swap land between Israel and the Palestinians. This would have required Israel to annex land currently occupied by settlements in the West Bank, and was [met with hostility](#) by some.

## Sanctions Debate

The most recent call for sanctions against Israel comes following 10 days of fighting involving airstrikes by Israeli forces and rocket attacks from Gaza.

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<sup>2</sup> PQ [151691](#) [Palestinians: Recognition of States], 19 February 2021.

<sup>3</sup> PQ [82211](#) [Palestinians: Recognition of States], 9 September 2020.

The fighting took place from 10 May, to a ceasefire overnight on 20 to 21 May. The [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) reported that the escalation in hostilities killed 256 Palestinians (at least 129 of those civilians), including 66 children, and 10 Israelis (plus 3 foreign nationals), including 2 children. The fighting also caused 1,948 injuries in Palestinian territory, and 710 injuries in Israel.<sup>4</sup>

At the peak of the hostilities, up to [113,000 people were displaced](#) before the ceasefire.

On the 16 May, [the UK expressed concern](#) at the violence at the UN Security Council. The UK condemned the firing of rockets at civilian populations, calling them “acts of terrorism from Hamas and other terrorist groups”. The UK also expressed its support for Israel’s “legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack.” In doing so, the [UK also expressed concern](#) over reports of civilian housing and other infrastructure being destroyed or damaged, and stated that “Israel’s actions must be proportionate and in line with International Humanitarian Law”.

The UK Government Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly, in response to an [Urgent Question on 19 May](#), repeated the Government’s condemnation of the firing of rockets at Jerusalem and other locations within Israel. He also called upon Israel “to adhere to the principles of necessity and proportionality when defending its legitimate security interests.”

On sanctions, the UK Government currently lists Hamas and some individual leaders of Hamas on its [sanctions list](#). Hamas is a Palestinian militant Islamist movement whose political wing is the governing authority in the Gaza Strip. Hamas’ military wing is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the UK Government.

The UK Government has not expressed any intention to impose sanctions on Israel. While the UK has consistently considered Israel’s settlement activity to be illegal under international law, in line with the opinion of the [International Court of Justice](#) and the [UN Security Council](#), the UK also supports Israel’s right to self-defence so long as this is proportionate and necessary.

## The UK Sanctions Regime

Under the [Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018](#), an appropriate Minister may adopt Regulations where they consider that doing so would be appropriate to comply with an international obligation, or for one of the

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<sup>4</sup> The UNOCHA data contains the following disclaimer: “Those reported as civilians are individuals that are not members of armed forces and were not directly participating in hostilities at the time that they were killed. Whether an individual is qualified as civilian or not, has no bearing on the legality of the killing. Data is based on information from at least three independent and reliable sources at the time of reporting. As further verified information becomes available, the number of fatalities in total, and in any of the categories, may change.”

purposes listed in the Act. Such purposes include promoting the resolution of armed conflict, the protection of civilians, national or international peace and security interests, or promoting compliance with international human rights or humanitarian law.

The [Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020](#) also contains specific measures to counter activities which, if carried out by or on behalf of a State within the territory of that State, would amount to a serious violation of an individual's human rights, namely their:

- right to life
- right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- right to be free from slavery, not to be held in servitude or required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

## 2

## Press articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

### [Groups urge Biden to halt \\$735m weapons sale to Israel](#)

Al Jazeera  
William Roberts  
8 June 2021

### [Palestine and the UN's 'responsibility to protect' doctrine](#)

Al Jazeera  
Abdelwahab El-Affendi  
1 June 2021

### [5 reasons why Gaza war won't lead to Israeli-Palestinian peace – analysis](#)

The Jerusalem Post  
Tovah Lazaroff  
24 May 2021

### [Israel-Gaza: A conflict on pause as both sides claim victory](#)

BBC News Online  
Jeremy Bowen  
23 May 2021

### [It's not as simple as 'Palestine good, Israel bad'](#)

The Times  
David Quinn  
23 May 2021

### [UAE offers to play role in Israel-Palestine peace talks](#)

The Guardian  
Martin Chulov  
23 May 2021

### [Israel and Hamas ready to fight on](#)

The Times  
Anshel Pfeffer and Richard Spencer  
22 May 2021

[Israel-Gaza ceasefire holds despite Jerusalem clash](#)

BBC News Online

21 May 2021

[Aid for Palestinians is sent up in smoke by their terrorist rulers](#)

The Times

Ron Prosor (former ambassador of Israel to the UK and the United Nations)

21 May 2021

[On Israel-Palestine, Americans and Europeans swap scripts](#)

Politico

Rym Momtaz and David M. Herszenhorn

19 May 2021

[Israel is losing to Hamas in Gaza by winning – opinion](#)

The Jerusalem Post

Douglas Bloomfield

19 May 2021

[Israel-Palestine conflict: why Gulf leaders are staying quiet – for now](#)

The Conversation

17 May 2021

[Israel and Palestine heading for ‘uncontainable’ crisis, UN chief warns](#)

The Guardian

Oliver Holmes, Bethan McKernan and Julian Borger

16 May 2021

[Israel-Gaza: Conflict stalls Arab-Israeli rapprochement](#)

BBC News Online

Frank Gardner

14 May 2021

[Jerusalem unrest exposes the brittleness of Israeli sovereignty over Palestinians](#)

Brookings

Omar H. Rahman

12 May 2021

[Top Abbas advisers urge Palestinian statehood with ‘soft’ sovereignty](#)

Times of Israel

Stuart Winer

23 March 2021

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# Press releases

### [Human Rights Council Special Session: UK statement on the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**27 May 2021**

**The UK's Ambassador to the UN and WTO in Geneva, Simon Manley, delivered this statement during the Special Session on Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem.**

The United Kingdom strongly welcomes the ceasefire in Israel and Gaza.

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab travelled to the region this week to support efforts to ensure the ceasefire is permanent, which is a necessary step to ending the cycle of violence.

I offer Boris Johnson's deepest condolences to the families of those civilians killed. Each one of those deaths was and is a tragedy.

The recent conflict demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards a more positive future for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

During the recent escalation in violence, the UK has unequivocally condemned indiscriminate attacks by Hamas and other militant groups on Israel.

We are clear that Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence. All actions taken when exercising that right must be consistent with the principles of distinction, proportionality, humanity and necessity, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and avoid civilian casualties.

We are gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. That is why the UK has provided an initial £3.2 million of aid to UNRWA's emergency flash appeal to help address the immediate humanitarian needs. We continue to push for unhindered humanitarian access into Gaza.

As we work to rebuild calm, the UK will continue to call on all actors to adhere to International Humanitarian Law.

We consistently oppose settlements, demolitions and evictions across the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Settlements are illegal under international law and damage the prospects for peace.



We applaud the efforts of all who have engaged with the parties in recent days to ensure that the ceasefire is durable and to find a way to improve the lives of Palestinians.

As Dominic Raab has made clear in his meetings with the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, the UK will continue to work to find a durable resolution to the conflict. We continue to believe that the only sustainable solution is a two state solution, leading to a safe and secure Israel, living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian state, based on 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states.

**President Rivlin comments on the decision of the UN Human Rights Council**  
**Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
**27 May 2021**

President Rivlin, this evening (Thursday, 27 May 2021):

The world turned upside down. Instead of hearing the free world speak out clearly against terror organization Hamas and its leaders, clear examples of war criminals, the UN Human Rights Council makes an inexplicable decision against Israeli citizens who faced the criminal fire of thousands of missiles against innocent civilians.

Even after these mistaken and unacceptable decisions, Israel will continue to be committed – always and before everything else – to the security of its citizens and ensuring their safety.

**PM Netanyahu comments on the UN Human Rights Council decision**  
**Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs**  
**27 May 2021**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, today (Thursday, 27 May 2021):

Today's shameful decision is yet another example of the UN Human Rights Council's blatant anti-Israel obsession. Once again, an immoral automatic majority at the Council whitewashes a genocidal terrorist organization that deliberately targets Israeli civilians while turning Gaza's civilians into human shields. This while depicting as the 'guilty party' a democracy acting legitimately to protect its citizens from thousands of indiscriminate rocket attacks. This travesty makes a mockery of international law and encourages terrorists worldwide.

### **PM Netanyahu meets with UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab**

#### **Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**26 May 2021**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, this afternoon (Wednesday, 26 May 2021), at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, met with British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

Prime Minister Netanyahu at the start of the meeting:

It's good to see you again in better times and we'll work together to make them even better. Thank you and Prime Minister Johnson, Boris, for the staunch, unwavering support of our right to self-defense during the recent operation. It's much appreciated.

British Foreign Secretary Raab:

I'm here as a friend as you know that's a great supporter of Israel and we're looking forward to talking about the bilateral relationship but also how we move things forward elsewhere. You can always count on us.

Israeli Ambassador to the UK Tzipi Hotovely also participated in the meeting.

### **Foreign Secretary visits Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories (May 2021)**

#### **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**25 May 2021**

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories for talks with senior leaders following the Israel-Gaza ceasefire.

The Foreign Secretary will meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah during his 1-day visit. The UK remains committed to the 2-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation, deliver Palestinian self-determination and preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity.

He will also meet Israeli Foreign and Defence Ministers, Gabi Ashkenazi and Benny Gantz, as well as Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and Foreign Minister Riad Malki.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The UK welcomes the ceasefire in Israel and Gaza. It is crucial that all sides now focus on ensuring it can last. The events of the last month

demonstrate the urgent need to make genuine progress towards a more positive future for both Israelis and Palestinians, and breaks the cycle of violence that has claimed so many lives.

The UK supports a two-state solution as the best way to deliver a lasting peace.

### **MFA response to UNSC announcement**

#### **Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**22 May 2021**

We thank President Biden and the US administration for their continued support of Israel and its right to defend its citizens, as well as for its activity at the Security Council.

The full responsibility for this escalation lies with the Hamas terrorist organization, which chose to initiate rocket fire at Israel's capital of Jerusalem, the areas surrounding the Gaza Strip, and other cities in Israel.

It is very unfortunate to see that the Security Council has ignored the launching of over 4,000 rockets at Israeli civilians from populated areas in Gaza. Hamas uses the people of Gaza as a human shield, cynically exploits their suffering, and shoots at border crossings in order to prevent the entry of humanitarian aid, food, medicine and electricity into Gaza from Israel.

We expect that the international community condemn and disarm Hamas and ensure Gaza's rehabilitation while preventing the diversion of funds and weapons to terrorism. Israel continues to be committed to the fate of the captives and missing persons being held by Hamas in Gaza, and insists on their safe return.

Israel thanks the countries that supported Israel's right to defend itself and will continue to do so against any threat against its citizens.

### **UK aid package to help provide emergency relief for civilians in Gaza**

#### **Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**20 May 2021**

The UK will provide new funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA to help provide food, water, and emergency shelter to Palestinians affected by the recent escalation in violence in Gaza, the UK's Minister for the Middle East James Cleverly announced today (20 May 2021).

The UK support comes as UNRWA launches an emergency appeal calling for urgent support to meet immediate humanitarian needs. Existing UK aid to

UNRWA is already helping the Agency to provide food supplies to more than one million refugees in Gaza this year.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza was already concerning, with the percentage of the population living in poverty expected to increase this year from 53 per cent to 64 per cent. COVID is still spreading in Gaza and 2 million Palestinians have been living under severe movement and access restrictions.

Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, James Cleverly, said:

Palestinian and Israeli civilians should not face the brunt of this conflict, and no child or family should go without food, water or shelter. Today's UK support will help UNRWA deliver life-saving humanitarian aid to those that need it most.

The international community needs to ensure UNRWA is able to save lives and reduce the suffering.

The escalation of violence and loss of life in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories has shocked all of us. Both sides must work towards an immediate ceasefire, to prevent the further loss of life and a worsening humanitarian situation.

The UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has spoken in recent days with the Israeli Foreign Minister and Palestinian Prime Minister, where he reinforced the UK's clear message of de-escalation.

At the UN Security Council, the UK is calling for an urgent ceasefire and measures by all sides to reduce further violence. The UK will also participate in an emergency UN General Assembly session today.

### **Statement by PM Netanyahu**

#### **Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

**15 May 2021**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, this evening (Saturday, 15 May 2021):

"It has been five days since Hamas brazenly fired rockets at Jerusalem and other Israeli cities in a totally unprovoked attack.

"This past week, millions of Israelis were forced into bomb shelters as missiles rained down on our cities. Several Israelis have been killed. Many more have been wounded. You know and I know, no country would tolerate this. Israel will not tolerate this.

“Israel has responded forcefully to these attacks and we will continue to respond forcefully until the security of our people is reinstated and restored.

“We’ve eliminated dozens of Hamas terrorists and taken out hundreds of terrorist sites, including missile launchers and buildings that Hamas used to plan and perpetrate these attacks.

“Two nights ago, Israel also seriously degraded the terror infrastructure of Hamas. We knocked out part of the vast subterranean tunnel network that Hamas uses to attack Israel.

“I want to remind the world that in firing on our cities, Hamas is committing a double war crime. They’re targeting our civilians and hiding behind Palestinian civilians, effectively using them as human shields.

“As always, Israel is doing everything possible to protect our civilians and keep Palestinian civilians out of harm’s way. We demonstrated this yet again today when we warned civilians to vacate the building used by the Hamas terror intelligence. They vacated the premises before the target was destroyed and that’s why you don’t hear of casualties from these collapsing terror towers because we take special care to avoid these civilian casualties, exactly the opposite of Hamas.

“Defeating Hamas does not only serve Israel's interest, it serves the interests of all those who seek peace, stability and security in the Middle East.

“I want to thank Israel’s many friends in the international community who have strongly backed Israel’s action in defending ourselves. I want to thank the President of the United States Joe Biden and I want to thank the many countries, including European countries, who flew the Israeli flag in solidarity on their government buildings.

“No one should have any equivocation about the choice that is so clear here and I want to thank President Biden for his clear and unequivocal support. You cannot equate a democracy that values life with a terror organization that glorifies death.

“I also want to say a word about the violence we have seen in recent days within Israeli towns, from Lod to Bat Yam, from Akko to Haifa. The Jewish state will not tolerate pogroms against our citizens. We will not allow our Jewish citizens to be lynched or to live in fear of murderous Arab gangs. We will not tolerate the torching of synagogues and the torching of property.

“At the same time, we will not allow Jews to take the law into their own hands and attack innocent Arabs, or lynch an innocent Arab; there was one such case, such effort. We will not allow these attacks on innocent Jews or Arabs

alike. To tolerate this unacceptable vigilantism and violence is to pave a way to anarchy.

“Israel is the Jewish and democratic state, where all our citizens, Jews, Arabs and everyone else, are equal before the law and will receive equal protection from those who enforce the law.

“I am fully confident that Israel will be able to deal with these threats from without and these threats from within. I am confident in our army. I am confident in our police. And above all, I am confident in the resolve and determination of the people of Israel.

“Just as we’ve always done, we will weather this storm and emerge stronger than ever. Thank you.”

### Israeli settlements: statement by France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK

**Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

**6 May 2021**

The governments of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom have issued a joint statement on Israeli settlements:

We urge the Government of Israel to reverse its decision to advance the construction of 540 settlement units in the Har Homa E area of the occupied West Bank, and to cease its policy of settlement expansion across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Settlements are illegal under international law, and threaten prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

If implemented, the decision to advance settlements in Har Homa, between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, will cause further damage to the prospects for a viable Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and a Palestinian State. This move, alongside settlement advancement in Givat HaMatos and continued evictions in East Jerusalem, including in Sheikh Jarrah, also undermines efforts to rebuild trust between the parties, following the positive resumption of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

We call on both sides to refrain from any unilateral action and resume a credible and meaningful dialogue, to advance efforts for the two state solution and an end to the conflict.

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## PQs

### Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

09 Jun 2021 | 10604

**Asked by: Dan Carden**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support the unimpeded delivery of fuel and emergency humanitarian relief to Gaza.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

Access for humanitarian purposes into and out of Gaza remains critical. We are urging the Government of Israel to ensure access is maintained to ensure delivery of humanitarian supplies, including fuel. I announced on 20 May that the UK is providing £3.2 million to the UN Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) emergency flash appeal, which launched on 19 May. The emergency appeal by UNRWA focuses on meeting the immediate humanitarian needs of vulnerable Palestinians living in Gaza.

### Israel: Coronavirus

09 Jun 2021 | 10382

**Asked by: Julie Elliott**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Israeli government on covid19 vaccinations in that region.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The British Embassy Tel Aviv and the British Consulate-General Jerusalem are in regular contact with the relevant parties and continue to raise the issue of timely access to vaccines. The Foreign Secretary most recently raised this during his visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 26 May. The UK is committed to global equitable access to effective vaccines as demonstrated by our £548 million contribution to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) - the international initiative to support global equitable access to vaccines. We are pleased that the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) were among the first to benefit from the COVAX scheme with delivery of over 61,000 doses that arrived on 17 March 2021. Since that initial shipment, we are pleased that several further deliveries have arrived in the OPTs, including most recently on 1 June 2021.

### [Israel: Palestinians](#)

07 Jun 2021 | HL443

**Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Prime Minister has spoken to President al-Sisi of Egypt since the recent outbreak of violence between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants in Gaza; and, if so, whether they discussed the possibility of Egyptian mediation between the government of Israel and Hamas to secure a ceasefire.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa engaged the Egyptian Ambassador in London, and the British Embassy Cairo worked closely with the Government of Egypt. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts to mediate, working closely with the US.

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. Hamas must end all attacks on Israel. It is also now important for Israel to facilitate rapid humanitarian access in and out of Gaza. As the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop, and every effort must be made to avoid loss of life.

### [Israel: Palestinians](#)

02 Jun 2021 | HL355

**Asked by: Baroness Janke**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the possibility of independent (1) reporting, and (2) monitoring, of human rights during the current conflict in Israel and Palestine.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We have not made this assessment. However, the UK continues to engage with the Israeli government on human rights issues in the context of the occupation. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. The situation on the ground demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. We will continue to support human rights scrutiny in Israel and the OPTs, and support Palestinian self-determination.



### **Israel: Palestinians**

**02 Jun 2021 | HL312**

**Asked by: Baroness Sheehan**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what they consider necessary to achieve a long-term resolution to the conflict in Israel and Palestine

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The recent violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. We also fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts to that end, working closely with the US. The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life.

We agree with President Biden's recent remarks that Palestinians and Israelis equally deserve to live safely and securely and to enjoy equal measures of freedom, prosperity, and democracy. Our long-standing objective is a negotiated two-state solution which will allow Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, lessening the likelihood of politically driven violence and incitement to violence. We continue to believe that the best way to advance a two state solution is through dialogue. We therefore urge all sides to show maximum restraint and refrain from taking actions which endanger civilians and make peace more difficult.

### **Palestinians: Elections**

**27 May 2021 | HL220**

**Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have had made (1) to representatives of the government of Palestine, and (2) to President Abbas, regarding the decree on 29 April postponing the 22 May legislative elections and the 31 July presidential elections.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We are disappointed that elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been postponed. The Palestinian people should be allowed to enjoy their democratic rights - and Israel must allow voting for Palestinians in East Jerusalem, in line with the Oslo Accords. Elections are long overdue and we urge the swift setting of a new date.

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**27 May 2021 | HL218**

**Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to recent clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants, (1) what action they are taking to encourage restraint on both sides; and (2) what discussions they have had with the government of the United States on how to de-escalate the situation.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May. As the Prime Minister has made clear, leaders in the region must now work to find a durable solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict that prevents terrorism, ends the cycle of violence, and delivers a sustainable and just peace based on a two state solution. We continue to fully support Egyptian and UN mediation efforts.

The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to deliver Palestinian self-determination and ensure Israel's status as a Jewish, democratic state.

Ministers and Ambassadors throughout the Middle East are also engaging regional partners, including Egypt, Jordan and Turkey, while we remain in close contact with the US administration.

### **Israel: Palestinians**

**27 May 2021 | 6444**

**Asked by: Layla Moran**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 24 May 2021 to Question 3134 on Arms Trade: Israel, if his Department will conduct an investigation to determine whether any arms exported under a UK export licence were used in reported attacks on Palestinian civilians in (a) Gaza and (b) the West Bank during the violence of April and May 2021.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

### Jerusalem: Violence

26 May 2021 | HL192

**Asked by: The Lord Bishop of Southwark**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches of Jerusalem on 11 May that the violence in Jerusalem "violates the sanctity of the people of Jerusalem and of Jerusalem as the City of Peace"; and what plans they have to call on relevant parties (1) to halt further violence, and (2) to ensure the safety of worshippers.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK is clear that the violence against peaceful worshippers and must stop. Respect for the historic Status Quo at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem is important at all times. We encourage all parties to maintain calm, avoid provocation and uphold the Status Quo to ensure the safety and the security of the Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and all who worship there.

The UK welcomes the announcement of a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza on 20 May, which is an important step to ending the cycle of violence and loss of civilian life. The UK worked actively to urge the parties to work with mediators towards an immediate ceasefire. We fully supported Egyptian, Qatari and UN efforts, working closely with the US. The Foreign Secretary visited Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories on 25 and 26 May for talks with senior leaders following the ceasefire. During his visit the Foreign Secretary met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and reiterated the UK's firm commitment to the two-state solution as the best way to permanently end the occupation, deliver Palestinian self-determination and preserve Israel's Jewish and democratic identity.

### Jerusalem: Palestinians

25 May 2021 | HL101

**Asked by: Baroness Sheehan**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they will take to protect Palestinians from being evicted from their homes in Sheik Jarrah, East Jerusalem, to make way for Israeli settlers.

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK regularly raises forced evictions of Palestinians from property with the Government of Israel. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which applies to all occupied territories, prohibits demolitions or forced evictions absent military necessity. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of

circumstances, evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians and is harmful to efforts to promote peace.

The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa tweeted on the 8 May outlining our concern over tensions in Jerusalem linked to the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. We continue to urge Israel to cease such actions. UK Officials at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv continue to raise the issue regularly with the Israeli Authorities.

### **Arms Trade: Israel**

**24 May 2021 | 4043**

#### **Asked by: Kenny MacAskill**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the similarities between (a) active export licences for Israel and (b) the twelve licences that the Department for Business identified as being for components which could be part of equipment used by the Israel Defence Forces in Gaza on 12 August 2014.

#### **Answering member: Mr Ranil Jayawardena | Department for International Trade**

On 12<sup>th</sup> August 2014, HM Government said it was concerned that, in the event of a resumption of significant hostilities, it would not be able to clarify if the export licence criteria were being met and, accordingly, would suspend the twelve licences identified.

Today, HM Government is satisfied that we are able to assess extant licences and new applications against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria ('the Consolidated Criteria').

We continue to monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories closely and keep relevant licences under review. We will take action to suspend, refuse or revoke licences – in line with the Consolidated Criteria – if circumstances require.

HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated Criteria.

**[Israel: Palestinians](#)**

21 May 2021 | 663

**Asked by: Lyn Brown**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what counter measures his Department has considered in the event of further Israeli annexation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We remain strongly opposed to any move to annex all or part of the West Bank. Such a move would be contrary to international law and deeply damaging to prospects for lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

**[Israel: Palestinians](#)**

17 May 2021 | 75

**Asked by: Hywel Williams**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Israeli counterpart on the prosecution of Palestinian children by Israeli military courts.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

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 Palestinian children. Officials from the British Embassy in Tel Aviv last raised the issue of Palestinian children in detention on 19 March with the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children.

**[Gaza: Israel](#)**

17 May 2021 | 426

**Asked by: Layla Moran**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether Israeli F-35 aircrafts, of which each plane includes a 15 per cent UK work share, are being used in the air strikes on Gaza; and what steps he has taken to determine whether planes being used in the air strikes in Gaza include UK components.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The ongoing violence across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is deeply concerning and must stop. We urge all parties to de-escalate. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence, and the right to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, in line with International Humanitarian Law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

All UK arms export licences are assessed thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and we keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard.

**West Bank: Demolition**

**28 Apr 2021 | 185340**

**Asked by: Caroline Lucas**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many UK-funded humanitarian aid structures in the West Bank including East Jerusalem have been demolished or seized by the Israeli authorities since 1 January 2020.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK regularly raises the demolition of Palestinian property with the Government of Israel, including over the repeated confiscation and demolition of donor-funded assistance and structures at Humsa al Bqai'a. We continue to monitor the situation in Humsa al Bqai'a closely. Officials from the British Consulate General in Jerusalem most recently visited on 16 February. UK and European UN Security Council members delivered a joint statement on 25 February, calling for unimpeded access for the delivery of vital humanitarian aid to the community. The UK Ambassador alongside European Ambassadors urged an end to demolitions in Humsa Al-Baqai'a in a meeting with Israeli authorities on 25 February. There have been no further demolitions or confiscations in the community since 22 February.

**Israel and the Palestinians: Supporting Peace**

**20 Apr 2021 | 692 c838**

**Asked by: Sheryll Murray**

With the G7 coming to Cornwall, we should underline our commitment to international institutions and multilateral co-operation. We welcomed the US middle east partnership for peace Act in December, but does the Minister agree that it is now time for the UK to take a board seat on the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace?

**Answered by: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

I thank my hon. Friend for her question, which I partially answered in my prior response to the hon. Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper). We have no current plans, but we always take a keen interest in any initiatives that encourage peace and co-operation between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, and indeed, the Israeli people

and the Palestinian people. We will continue to work along- side Governments in the region and the US Administration in pursuit of that objective.

**Israel and the Palestinians: Supporting Peace**

**20 Apr 2021 | 692 c838**

**Asked by: Rosie Cooper**

It is now five months since the US Congress passed a \$250 million Act to create the international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace, the largest ever investment in peace building. In November, our Ministers promised to examine the feasibility of the UK taking up one of the international seats on the fund's board. Will the Minister tell us the results of that assessment and confirm that the UK will use the G7 summit to step up and help to lead this exciting new project with the United States?

**Answered by: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We always engage positively with any steps that push towards greater peace and reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and we have engaged with this process. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we are currently going through a programme of work assessing what we will do with our overseas development aid, but we will continue to engage with the Biden Administration, the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to pursue what has been the long-standing UK goal: a peaceful, prosperous, meaningful two-state solution.

**West Bank: Internally Displaced People**

**22 Mar 2021 | HL13988**

**Asked by: Lord Oates**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement by Save the Children on 3 February that the "number of displaced Palestinian children is at a four-year high as demolitions in the West Bank continue".

**Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

We are aware of the Save the Children statement on 3 February. Our Ambassador in Tel Aviv has raised the issue of ongoing demolitions with the Israeli Authorities, most recently in a meeting alongside like-minded partners on 25 February. The Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa called on Israel to stop demolitions on 5 February 2021 and raised his concerns about demolitions of Palestinian homes and structures with the Israeli Ambassador on 29 October 2020. UK officials from the British Consulate in Jerusalem have made regular visits to areas at risk of demolition and eviction to reiterate UK support for those communities. The UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. The practice causes unnecessary suffering to Palestinians, including Palestinian children, and is harmful to efforts to promote peace.

**Israel: UN Human Rights Council**

**09 Mar 2021 | 163217**

**Asked by: Karen Bradley**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of potential bias against Israel at the UN Human Rights Council.

**Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK has stood up for Israel when it faces bias and unreasonable criticism, and has been clear that the existence of a dedicated agenda item ('Item 7') damages the prospect for a two-state solution and does little to advance dialogue, stability or mutual understanding. As such, at the 40th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2019 we moved to voting against all resolutions under Item 7. However, the UN and its member states have every right to address issues of concern in a measured, balanced and proportionate way. We will continue to support scrutiny of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the Human Rights Council, so long as it is justified, proportionate, and not proposed under Item 7.



## 5

# Further Parliamentary material

## Debates

### [International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace](#)

17 Nov 2020 | House of Commons | 684 cc81-105WH

### [Occupied Palestinian Territories](#)

24 Sep 2020 | House of Commons | 680 cc1209-41

## Statements

### [Violence in Israel and Palestine](#)

13 May 2021 | House of Lords | 812 cc188-192

Lords statement on the violence in Israel and Palestine.

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay:** The following Answer to an Urgent Question was given in the House of Commons on Wednesday 12 May.

“The recent escalation in violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories is deeply concerning. It is the worst violence seen there for several years. As the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have made clear, this cycle of violence must stop and every effort must be made to avoid the loss of life, especially that of children. The UK offers our deepest condolences to the families of those civilians killed. Civilian deaths, both in Israel and Gaza, are a tragedy.

We urge all sides to refrain from any kind of provocation so that calm is restored as quickly as possible. As we enter the final days of the holy month of Ramadan, restoration of peace and security is in everyone’s interest. The UK will continue to support that goal. The UK unequivocally condemns the firing of rockets at Jerusalem and other locations in Israel. We strongly condemn these acts of terrorism from Hamas and other terrorist groups, who must permanently end their incitement and rocket fire against Israel. There is no justification for any targeting of civilians. Israel has a legitimate right to self-defence and to defend its citizens from attack. In doing so, it is vital that all actions are proportionate, are in line with international humanitarian law, and make every effort to avoid civilian casualties. Violence against peaceful worshippers of any faith is unacceptable. The UK has been clear that the attacks on worshippers must stop. The status quo in Jerusalem is important

at all times, but especially so during religious festivals such as Ramadan. Our priority now must be an immediate de-escalation on all sides and an end to civilian deaths.

As I made clear over the weekend, we are concerned about tensions in Jerusalem linked to threatened evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. That threat is allayed for now, but we urge Israel to cease such actions, which in most cases are contrary to international humanitarian law. The UK continues to support international efforts to reduce the tension. The Foreign Secretary delivered a message of de-escalation in a call to the Israeli Foreign Minister yesterday and will speak to the Palestinian Prime Minister shortly. I have spoken to the Israeli ambassador and the Palestinian head of mission in the UK to urge them to de-escalate and to restore calm. The UK has also engaged at the UN Security Council, calling for all sides to take measures to reduce further violence and making clear our deep concern at the violence at the holy sites in Jerusalem. I am sure that the Security Council will continue to monitor the situation closely, and it is due to reconvene. UK embassies throughout the middle east are engaging with regional partners, and we remain in close contact with the US Administration and our European allies.

The situation on the ground over the last few days demonstrates the urgent need to make progress towards peace. The UK remains committed to a two-state solution as the best way to bring peace and stability to the region. I repeat: we urge all sides to show maximum restraint and refrain from taking actions that endanger civilians and make a sustainable peace more difficult.”

## Early Day Motions

### [Irish Dail policy on the the annexation of Palestinian territories](#)

**EDM 145 (session 2021-22)**

**7 June 2021**

**Kenny MacAskill**

That this House praises the historic decision by the Irish Dail to condemn the illegal annexation of Palestinian lands by Israel; notes that the Dail Motion condemned the recent and ongoing forced displacement of Palestinian communities in the occupied Palestinian territory and described the annexation of Palestinian territory as a violation of international law; recognises that this historic moment is a victory for justice and recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; and calls on the UK Government and devolved legislatures to replicate said decision.

**Arms export licences for sales to the Israeli Military**

**EDM 138 (session 2021-22)**

**27 May 2021**

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle**

That this House notes with concern the recent granting of and use of extant UK licences for the export to the Israeli military of categories of arms and arms components including military technology and components for aircrafts, helicopters, and drones, as well as grenades, bombs, missiles, armoured vehicles, tanks, ammunition, and small arms; is therefore concerned that Ministers have not disclosed whether UK-made exports were used in the recent bombardment of the Gaza Strip and repression of civilian protests in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory; reminds the Government that criteria 2, 3 and 4, of the consolidated criteria on arms exports precludes licensing where there is a clear risk that items may be used for internal repression or in the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian law; notes the criteria precludes licensing for items which would provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing conflicts, and precludes licensing for items when there is a clear risk that they could be used to assert by force a territorial claim; therefore calls for an investigation to determine whether UK-made arms and components have been used in the recent violence and if they are implicated in war crimes under investigation by the International Criminal Court, including settlement building in occupied territories; and calls for a suspension of UK arms sales to Israel until it can be demonstrated, subject to parliamentary scrutiny, that weapons and components imported from the UK are used solely in accordance with the consolidated criteria.

**Occupation of Palestine**

**EDM 107 (session 2021-22)**

**25 May 2021**

**Kenny MacAskill**

That this House, whilst welcoming a ceasefire in Israel, Palestine and Gaza, notes with concern the continued threat posed to Palestinian civilians by the Israeli Defence Forces; therefore regrets that the Ministry of Defence refused to publish details of the agreement strengthening military co-operation signed by the British Armed Forces with the Israeli Defence Forces on 2 December 2020; further regrets that the Department of International Trade declined to publish the names of companies granted export licences for components potentially for use by the Israeli Defence Forces; and believes that in view of past Palestinian civilian deaths and the severity of the ongoing threat that continues to face them that normal security and commercial confidences are overridden by legitimate public interest.

**East Jerusalem and Gaza**

**EDM 25 (session 2021-22)**

**12 May 2021**

**Kenny MacAskill**

That this House condemns unreservedly the Israeli brutality in East Jerusalem and Gaza; refutes entirely that there is any equivalence with actions by Palestinian demonstrators or militants; notes that there is no comparison between state orchestrated violence perpetrated by a military and civil power with legitimate protest by civilians or even retaliatory attacks by militant organisations; reaffirms its calls for peace in the area; and calls on the Government to unequivocally condemn Israeli actions and push for the upholding of international law.

**Violence perpetrated by Israeli authorities against Palestinian civilians in Sheikh Jarrah**

**EDM 3 (session 2021-22)**

**11 May 2021**

**Tahir Ali**

That this House unequivocally condemns the ongoing violence perpetrated by Israeli authorities against Palestinian civilians in the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem; condemns the attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli police which left hundreds of civilians injured; joins the UN in calling upon the Israeli authorities to demonstrate maximum restraint and to allow the freedom of peaceful assembly for Palestinians; opposes and will work to prevent the ongoing evictions of Palestinian families from East Jerusalem, which is part of a wider attempt to push Palestinians out of Jerusalem altogether; calls on the international community to pursue suitable sanction against the Israeli Government until all violations of international law and human rights are ceased; and recognises that the violence perpetrated by the Israeli authorities in May 2021, along with the continued evictions of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah, increases regional tensions and frustrates efforts to broker a lasting and just peace between Israel and Palestine.

**Israeli annexation of Palestinian land**

**EDM 1139 (session 2019-21)**

**16 Nov 2020**

**Tommy Sheppard**

That this House is deeply alarmed by the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements; notes that, despite the temporary suspension of formal annexation plans, Israel has accelerated the construction of illegal settlements across the West Bank to its fastest pace since 2012; recognises that settlement expansion amounts to the de facto annexation of territory,

and needs the same robust international response as formal annexation; acknowledges that Israel's displacement of Palestinian communities to establish Jewish only settlements, with different rights allocated depending on ethnicity, is being referred to by many political analysts and legal scholars as an example of apartheid; and calls on the Government to take effective measures in response.

## 6

# Human Rights and Democracy report

## Human Rights and Democracy: the 2019 Foreign and Commonwealth Office report

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Command Paper 273

16 July 2020

[Extract]

### **6.14 The State of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories**

2019 saw continued violations by the Government of Israel (GoI) of human rights and international humanitarian law in the context of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza (Occupied Palestinian Territories, or OPTs). Human rights abuses by the Palestinian Authority (PA), and by Hamas, the de facto administration in Gaza, continued.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza was exacerbated by protests and escalations of violence between Israel and Palestinian armed groups. According to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), a unit within the Israeli Ministry of Defence, 2,656 rockets and mortars, and 887 incendiary devices, were launched during 2019 into Israeli territory, causing 286 fires. In total, 5 Israeli civilians were killed. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 107 Palestinians were killed, including 36 by live ammunition fired by Israeli forces.

In March, a UN Commission of Inquiry (CoI) issued its report into alleged violations during the demonstrations in Gaza in 2018. The CoI concluded there were grounds to believe that in 187 of 189 fatalities, the use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces against demonstrators was unlawful. It did not investigate Hamas abuses, stating there was little information available. Israel referred eleven incidents of lethal force to the Military Attorney General for further investigation. In one case, one Israeli soldier was convicted. The UK continued to call for investigations into, and accountability for, excessive use of force in Gaza and the West Bank.

The UK continued to fund projects to help address Israeli restrictions on movement and access to and from Gaza, including legal advocacy to facilitate exit permits for traders and for Gazans seeking professional and educational opportunities.

Israel continued its systemic policy of settlement expansion, a breach of international humanitarian law, which the UK continued to oppose. During 2019, Israel advanced 9,865 units in the West Bank.

Israeli demolitions of Palestinian structures increased. According to the UN OCHA, 621 structures were demolished or seized in 2019, including 203 in East Jerusalem; the highest number of demolitions there since 2000. 914 Palestinians were displaced during 2019. In April, Israel introduced a one-year pilot of a new military order to fast-track demolitions with less discretion for judicial review. In July, Israeli authorities demolished ten Palestinian homes in areas where planning powers nominally reside with the PA. The UK continued to fund legal aid for Palestinians contesting eviction and demolition cases.

UN OCHA reported that 27 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces and settlers in the West Bank in 2019. The Israeli Security Agency (ISA) reported that in 2019 4 Israeli civilians were killed in the West Bank, as well one Israeli soldier. According to UN OCHA, the number of acts of violence and vandalism perpetrated by settlers against Palestinians increased for the third year running. ISA recorded 1,132 violent attacks by Palestinians in the West Bank. In January, Israel did not renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron. The UK expressed its concern over the development through a statement by the then Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Alistair Burt.

The number of Palestinian minors in Israeli detention decreased, with 186 detained at the end of 2019. We continued to seek improvements in their treatment. There were some improvements to legal access. The Fourth Geneva Convention provides that protected persons accused of offences shall be detained in the occupied territory. According to the UN Secretary-General, most Palestinian prisoners continued to be held in Israel.

We continued to urge the PA to respect human rights, ensure that complaints of ill treatment were properly investigated, and improve the security sector's compliance with international human rights standards. The PA drafted legislation to establish a National Preventive Mechanism against Torture, which would visit detention facilities and report on conditions.

In the West Bank, the PA continued to restrict space for civil society and freedom of expression. In October, a PA court ordered the shutdown of 59 news websites. However, the number of Palestinians detained in cases related to freedom of expression decreased. The UK called for the strengthening of respect for media freedom, including through legislative amendments.

In Gaza, Hamas continued to exercise strict control over civil society. In March, it violently cracked down on a protest against socioeconomic conditions, beating and detaining many demonstrators.

Hamas issued 2 death sentences in 2019. While the UK maintains a no-contact policy with Hamas, we made clear publicly our objections to its use of the death penalty.

Despite commitments from the PA on the protection of women, significant work continued to be required to improve access to justice and financial capital. Positive steps would include adopting the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in full, and enshrining the Family Protection Bill in law.

Israel remained a robust open democracy with a vibrant civil society. However, pressure continued on those criticising Israel's conduct in the OPTs, including rhetorical attacks by politicians, and visa delays and denials for activists working in the OPTs. In November, Israel expelled Human Rights Watch Country Director Omar Shakir, citing his alleged support for boycott actions against Israel.



# 7

## Further reading

### Commons Library Briefings

[Recent fighting in Israel and Palestine](#)

18 May 2021

[Israel: 2021 parliamentary election](#)

6 April 2021

[UK support for an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace](#)

16 November 2020

[The settlement and annexation of the occupied Palestinian Territories](#)

22 September 2020

[Annexation of the West Bank](#)

10 June 2020

[The Occupied Palestinian Territories: recent developments](#)

20 March 2017

[Palestinian statehood](#)

11 August 2011

### Reports

[A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution](#)

Human Rights Watch

27 April 2021

[Isolated and Alone. Palestinian Children Held in Solitary Confinement by Israeli Authorities for Interrogation](#)

Defense for Children International – Palestine

1 December 2020

### Websites

[30th special session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem – 27 May 2021](#)

A page on the UN Human Rights Council website, providing links to reports, statements and further information on the body's special session.

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