



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

See also the Lords debate on the Queen's Speech, included in the Israel section below.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions

Keir Starmer (Labour): ... I want to raise the appalling rise in antisemitism in the last week, and the attacks and violence that we have seen. On Saturday, a rabbi in Chigwell was hospitalised after being attacked outside his synagogue. Many of us will have seen the appalling incident in Golders Green. The Community Security Trust reports a 500% rise in antisemitic incidents since the outbreak of violence in Gaza and Israel. I know that the Government are working on this, and both the Prime Minister and I have condemned these antisemitic attacks and violence, but across this House we all know that Jewish communities remain very anxious. What more does the Prime Minister think can be done to provide the extra support and protection needed to reassure Jewish communities at this really very difficult time?

The Prime Minister: I share the right hon. and learned Gentleman's horror at the outbreak of antisemitic incidents. The Government have conveyed that message loud and clear to those who are responsible for enforcing the law against hate crime of that kind. Obviously, we will continue to work and support the Jewish community in any way that we can, particularly by working with the Community Safety Trust, which does an absolutely outstanding job, but also by showing, as a country and as a society, that we will call this out at every stage. We will not let it take root; we will not allow it to grow and fester. In welcoming his remarks, I may say that I believe it is one of the most important changes of attitude—or U-turns, I should say—that I have seen from the Labour party in recent times. I am delighted that he is taking that attitude now. But what this country wants to see is a Government who get on with delivering on the people's priorities, making everybody safe. It might have been a good thing if he had voted—and got his party to vote—for tougher sentences against serious and violent sexual offenders, to say nothing of people who commit hate crime.

Minister for Education and the Welsh Language:

Jeremy Miles

Minister for Health and Social Services:

Eluned Morgan

Deputy Minister for Social Services:

Julie Morgan

Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing:

Lynne Neagle

[TOP](#)

Israel

House of Lords Debate

Queen's Speech

col 601 Lord Polak (Conservative): ... I welcome the Government's commitment in the gracious Speech to stopping public bodies imposing their own approach or views about international relations by preventing boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns against foreign countries. The Government made it clear that legislation is required to address concerns that such boycotts may legitimise anti-Semitism. I ask my noble friend the Minister, in this context, to go one step further. I am sure it has not gone unnoticed by my noble friend that in recent days, our close friends the United States, Canada and Australia have all pulled out of Durban IV. On 6 May, the Canadian Member of Parliament Anthony Housefather said that Ottawa has confirmed that it will avoid the gathering in South Africa known as Durban IV, which, he says, "continues to be used to push anti-Israel sentiment and as a forum for anti-Semitism."

I raised this issue in this Chamber on 22 April and asked if the Minister would confirm that the UK would not attend Durban IV. I did not receive an answer, so, in posing this question again, I will add only this: what is it that the FCDO knows better than its counterparts in the United States, Canada and Australia? Perhaps, I could put it a different way: what is it that those three countries understand that the FCDO does not?

I celebrated Shavuot on Monday and Tuesday of this week. For those two days, my family was peacefully unaware of the updated news, but let me tell noble Lords what I saw. I saw ramped-up security at the synagogue, with excellent co-operation between the Met Police and the community security trust. Many members of the Jewish community are rightly terrified. I thank the Home Secretary and the Communities Secretary for their comforting open letter to the Jewish community, published just today. ...

The shocking and disturbing scenes on the streets of north-west London this weekend absolutely do not represent the views of the vast majority of Muslims living in the UK; and I would argue that the murderous acts of Hamas, indiscriminately firing deadly rockets at civilian areas in Israel, do not represent the views—and certainly not the interests—of the majority of the Palestinian people.

col 602 My noble friend Lord Shinkwin put it succinctly this morning in a letter to the *Telegraph*—I quote him because I could not possibly put it any better: "The repercussions for civilians caught up in the current conflict on both sides are tragic, but we should never lose sight of what is at stake. Israel's right to exist is under sustained and insidious attack from the terrorist Hamas regime and its puppetmaster, Iran. Hamas's cynicism knows no bounds. It thinks nothing of diverting international aid from hospitals to bunkers, building rocket factories in civilian areas, and using children as human shields, all in pursuit of its overriding goal: the destruction of the Jewish state." ...

In conclusion, does the Minister agree that we should increase pressure on Iran to stop supplying rockets and know-how to Hamas? Does he also agree with my friend Dore Gold,

who said: "The mistake of the 2015 nuclear deal must not be repeated, with billions of dollars going to Iran, fuelling the next wave of terrorism—including the terror of Hamas. Not only is the security of Israel at stake but the security of the wider Western alliance"?

col 611 Baroness Ludford (Liberal Democrat): ... I want to raise the Alliance for Middle East Peace, brought into even greater relevance by the present renewed conflict between Israel and Hamas and the appalling intercommunal violence within Israel. This group, founded in the United States some years ago, consists of over 100 NGOs working to foster reconciliation. The plan, supported by legislation in Congress, is to set up a sizeable international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace, inspired by our own successful International Fund for Ireland. It would bring together public and private donors to focus on supporting joint initiatives and co-operation between Israelis and Palestinians, and between Arabs and Jews in Israel and the wider region, encompassing both business and economic development and a range of civil society projects.

The Britain-Israel all-party group chaired by Bob Blackman MP and the noble Lord, Lord Turnberg, wrote to the Foreign Secretary earlier this month, in a letter I was pleased to co-sign, urging UK support for this fund and that the opportunity for a place on the board should be taken up. No reply has been received ...

col 617 Baroness Deech (Crossbench): ... I urge the Government not to forget their long-standing true allies in the Middle East, despite the untruths and hatred that have spewed forth in the past week in connection with the Israel-Hamas dispute. I call for a fair and open-minded assessment of the situation, with a perspective from British history and in relation to the rest of the Middle East. ...

col 618 ... I urge the Government not to follow Biden and not to join in an effort to remove sanctions against Iran, thereby enabling it to continue to smuggle weapons, to continue its terrorist activities and, of course, to support Hamas in its drive to dominate the Middle East. ...

Hamas's aim is not a state of Palestine, for that has been rejected several times over the years; it is the replacement of Israel by an Islamist state and the removal of every last Jew from Israel, just as all Jews have been dispossessed, persecuted, expelled, forbidden to live in or killed in that area. Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Algeria, Libya, Yemen and Lebanon are all Judenrein. The truth is that the dominant powers there cannot accept any Jewish presence in the area, and that is why ordinary negotiations between Israel and the others cannot succeed. Israel is the only state on earth whose enemies want to wipe it off the face of the earth.

Meanwhile we have taken our eyes off the real issues in that area. Syria appears to have been discussed in this House only once in the past year. Some 400,000 people have been killed there, including many Palestinians; 6 million people have been internally displaced and more than 6 million have fled. Its horrors and those of Lebanon, Yemen and Afghanistan make no mark. The Turks launched an attack on the Kurds, and there was no reaction. Islamists killed 94 Afghan schoolchildren and a Kabul mosque was bombed, and there was no reaction. Will the Minister proscribe Hamas in full to curb its actions?

The other action this country can take in order to calm the atmosphere is to withdraw from the forthcoming follow-up conference of the Durban racism conference of 2001. That conference degenerated into a hate-filled anti-Semitic meeting uniquely critical of Israel, giving cover to the real human rights abusers of the world. Attendees at the conference compared its anti-Jewish hysteria to 1930s Germany. The track record of Durban has been to harm race relations, poison progress and encourage anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and attacks. The USA, Australia and Canada have withdrawn from the Durban conference, and it is expected that other democratic countries will also do so, judging by their non-participation in previous follow-up conferences. I join the noble Lord, Lord Polak, in asking the Government to act to curb vicious anti-Semitism disguised as anti-Israel activity. Will the Government withdraw from Durban right now? ...