



DEBATE PACK

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Government policy on Iran

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

Middle East Minister James Cleverly [summed up the UK's policy towards Iran](#) on 3 November 2020 in the House of Commons:

Our priority remains to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability, to promote stability and security in the region, to secure the release of all our dual national detainees, and to keep the diplomatic door open for a new talks with Iran.

JCPOA nuclear deal

The UK was one of the instigators of the process that led to the [JCPOA nuclear deal with Iran](#). The Government was [disappointed by the US departure](#) from the deal and has continued to work with EU allies to [keep the JCPOA alive](#).

On the Iran nuclear deal, the [President elect's policy](#) aligns with UK policy:

Tehran must return to strict compliance with the deal. If it does so, I would rejoin the agreement and use our renewed commitment to diplomacy to work with our allies to strengthen and extend it...

Re-assembling the JCPOA is [fraught with difficulty](#), however. Illustrating the difficulties, leading Iranian nuclear scientist [Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was assassinated](#) on 27 November. There is widespread speculation that Israel carried out the operation with the knowledge of the US and Saudi governments, perhaps in order to [provoke Iran into a retaliation](#) that could justify an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities. Such a chain of events would make rejuvenating the Iranian nuclear deal next to impossible.

UN conventional arms embargo

The UN conventional arms embargo on Iran expired on 18 October 2020 as part of the agreed moves in the nuclear deal. When in August the US [proposed extending the arms embargo](#) indefinitely, France, Germany and the UK tried to find a compromise in the UN Security Council without success. The UK abstained on the US draft resolution "[because it was clear that it would not attract the support of the Council](#)." The Middle East Minister [added on 9 November](#) that the US had withdrawn from the JCPOA:

We cannot therefore support the US' action, which is incompatible with our current efforts to support the JCPOA. We remain committed to the JCPOA and have always said we regret the US' withdrawal from the deal.

Other European countries followed suit; in the end only the US and the Dominican Republic voted in favour.

Stability in the region

The UK Government is "[concerned at Iran's destabilising behaviour](#)" in the Middle East and, along with the EU, maintains over 200 sanctions listings against Iran, both [trade sanctions](#) and [sanctions targeted at individuals](#) (including the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, IRGC).

An EU arms embargo and UN ballistic missile restrictions on Iran remain in place, as do other UN embargoes on the transfer of weapons, for example to [Lebanese Hezbollah](#), [Iraqi militia groups](#) and the [Houthis in Yemen](#). These militias have been supported by the IRGC.

Dual nationality detainees

Several [dual UK/Iranian nationals are detained in Iran](#). Asked on 3 November 2020 about the new charges levelled against Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, [the Government said](#): "We are deeply concerned that Iran has issued new charges against Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe". Middle East Minister James Cleverly said that the UK had asked to be allowed to attend any court hearings; the Government had summoned the Iranian Ambassador and the UK Foreign Secretary had spoken to his Iranian counterpart several times recently.

[Press reports in September 2020](#) suggested that the UK was trying to pay off an acknowledged debt owed to Iran over an order for Chieftain tanks placed by the Shah of Iran before the 1979 revolution. The [reason for the non-payment](#), according to the Government, was that a court had frozen the money because of the sanctions regime.

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 the accuracy of external content.

[Iran passes law threatening to halt nuclear inspections and boost enrichment](#)

Guardian
3 December 2020

[Iran is alarmingly defiant over its nuclear ambitions](#)

Telegraph
1 December 2020

[Iran newspaper urges strike on Haifa if Israel killed scientist](#)

Belfast Telegraph
Amir Vahdat and Jon Gambrell
29 November 2020

[Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab 'concerned' about situation in Iran after killing of nuclear scientist](#)

Sky News
29 November 2020

[The Government has helped to let Iran, a rogue state, off the leash. It's time to rein it back in](#)

Conservative Home
Tobias Ellwood
28 October 2020

[More than 80 Tory MPs and peers write to PM over need to articulate UK policy on Iran](#)

The Jewish Chronicle
Lee Harpin
15 October 2020

[Zarif: Britain is a 'thief' if it links debt payment to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release](#)

Tehran Times
5 October 2020

[Zaghari-Ratcliffe: UK acknowledges debt owed to Iran over Shah's tank order](#)

Guardian
Patrick Wintour
4 September 2020

[Britain must stand with the US against Iranian tyranny](#)

Telegraph
Nile Gardiner
20 August 2020

[The IRGC eyes Iran's presidency](#)

Middle East Institute
Kasra Aarabi
1 July 2020

[Improving the UK Government's Approach to Protecting British Nationals Detained in Iran](#)

Redress
30 April 2020

[Iran's regional ambitions are not going anywhere](#)

Atlantic Council
Raz Zimmt
10 April 2020

[Iran attack: How much influence does UK have in US-Iran crisis?](#)

BBC News
James Landale
8 January 2020

[Amnesty International Accuses Iran of Human Rights Abuses](#)

VOA News
2 September 2020

[Forget our misguided friendship with Saudi Arabia: Iran is our natural ally](#)

Spectator
John R. Bradley
3 September 2017

3. Gov.uk

[Iranian ambassador summoned regarding Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
29 October 2020

Iranian Ambassador Hamid Baeidinejad was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) today following news that Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is to be recalled to court.

Thomas Drew, FCDO Director General for Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan, conveyed the UK's grave concern at this development and called for Iran to end her arbitrary detention.

An FCDO spokesperson said:

"We have made it clear to the Iranian ambassador that his country's treatment of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is unjustified and unacceptable, and is causing an enormous amount of distress.

Iran is further tarnishing its reputation through its actions towards Nazanin. It is time to end her arbitrary detention and that of the other dual British nationals it is holding."

[The world cannot afford another conflict in the Gulf region](#)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
20 October 2020

Statement by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Chargé d'Affaires to the UN, at the Security Council debate on security in the Gulf region

Thank you, Mr. President, and I want to start by thanking the Russian Presidency for holding this debate. The issue under consideration today is one of great importance. And as I start, let me just also say in response to Rob Malley, that I want to echo my German colleague on the case of Michael Kovrig, which causes us deep concern.

Mr. President, the United Kingdom remains concerned by the trajectory of violence, instability and hostile state-activity in the Middle East and Gulf region. Heightened tensions and insecurity serve no one's long term interest and instead put all at risk. We continue to call for de-escalation, dialogue and peace. The world cannot afford another conflict in the region.

As we have said repeatedly in this chamber, our commitment to the JCPoA remains resolute and it is at the forefront of our policy to support regional stability. Iranian nuclear armament would have catastrophic implications for the security of the region and beyond, and the JCPoA is the only vehicle currently available to prevent this. Nevertheless, while we remain committed to the nuclear deal, systematic Iranian non-compliance with its JCPoA commitments is putting it at risk. Iran must engage constructively with the Dispute Resolution Mechanism and Iran

must implement its commitments under the deal. This is critical for security across the Middle East.

We have also frequently expressed our concern about Iran's wider activity in the region. Iran has consistently carried out arms transfers to regional non-state actors in violation of Security Council resolutions. There can be no doubt that such proliferation destabilises the region and escalates already high tensions. That is why we regret the expiry of resolution 2231's conventional arms restrictions. We will therefore continue to build our security cooperation with allies and partners and work to find a sustainable solution to Iranian proliferation. And we will redouble our efforts to ensure implementation of other Security Council resolutions, which prohibit arms transfers to regional non-state actors, including resolution 1546 in Iraq, resolution 1701 in Lebanon and resolution 2216 in Yemen. We will also ensure that the remaining provisions of resolution 2231, in particular the restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile program, are rigorously enforced.

Mr. President, for too long the region has been scarred by terrorism, war and other conflict. But though instability has increased, we must not lose hope. So we welcome the announcements of normalisation between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, and we welcome the suspension of Israeli annexation plans. They must stay that way. The Abraham Accords demonstrate the potential for and the power of Jewish and Arab peoples in the region, breaking with the resentment and enmity of the past. Nelson Mandela once said, "resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies." The antidote to resentment and enmity is reconciliation and as Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said, we hope that other states will follow the UAE and Bahrain's example and thereby secure a more peaceful Middle East. So we must build on the momentum of the Abraham Accords in order to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which remains a wellspring for tension across the region. There is ultimately no substitute for direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians towards the ultimate objective of a two state solution. Here, as with many of the region's conflicts, mistrust can only be countered by measures to rebuild confidence and facilitate dialogue.

Conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Iraq continue to be sources of instability in the region. On Syria, the United Kingdom continues to support an inclusive Syrian-led political process, as provided for in resolution 2254. Following the latest Constitutional Committee talks, we again implore all parties to engage properly with the process. A political settlement is the only way to bring long term stability to Yemen and to address the worsening humanitarian crisis. We fully support the peace process led by the UN Special Envoy and we urge all parties, particularly the Yemeni parties, to engage constructively.

We remain committed to supporting a peaceful and prosperous Iraq, able to promote stability in the region. We are proud to work with Iraq within the global coalition to counter Daesh, a clear example of shared cooperation, effectively addressing one of the region's biggest security concerns.

Mr. President, we welcome the Secretary-General's participation in this debate and the United Nations' role working to resolve each of the aforementioned conflicts and sources of tension in the region. The Secretary-General can continue to rely on the United Kingdom's full support in each theatre.

However, as the concept note for today's debate suggests, there is a need to look beyond current crises and to engage on wider issues. In the longer term this will require a process within the region, which includes confidence building measures leading to a wider dialogue. The United Nations has a potential role to play as a trusted mediator and indeed, OP8 of resolution 598 makes provision for the Secretary-General to examine, with states of the region, measures to enhance regional security and stability. And while we hope that today's debate is a step in the right direction, we must be honest that an open debate in the Security Council, however well-intentioned, is not the forum for such conversations. Progress can only ultimately be made through candid conversations between all parties.

We are also not convinced that launching into security focused working groups will result in meaningful dialogue. We must remain realistic about the current level of regional mistrust. The issues involved are complex and sensitive, and an incremental approach is needed to build confidence and cooperation. More critically, as Russia points out, any dialogue needs to be shaped by regional participants. I want to welcome the commitment to regional security expressed by Iran in its letter of the 15th of October to the Council covering the Hormuz Peace Endeavour. But as a party to conflicts across the region, Iran is not an impartial actor, and it would not be appropriate for any initiative to be Iranian-led. More consultation is needed within the region to avoid another failed regional security initiative. We should learn from the many failed attempts in order to make a future initiative a success. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe that led to the 1975 Helsinki Accords provide both positive and negative lessons, which we can draw on.

Mr. President, in conclusion, it is vital that we hear from all regional states and we would welcome discussions beyond the Council that could help identify political and practical steps to reduce mistrust within the region. Such discussions could include a potential mediation role for the United Nations. As I said at the outset, tensions and insecurity in the region ultimately serve none.

I thank the Russian Federation again for organising this debate on such an important issue. Thank you, Mr. President.

[E3 foreign ministers' statement on the JCPoA](#)
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
20 September 2020

Statement by the UK, France and Germany:

"Today marks 30 days since the US sought to initiate the 'snapback mechanism', which allows a participant to the Joint Comprehensive Plan

of Action (JCPoA) to seek the re-imposition of the multilateral sanctions against Iran lifted in 2015 in accordance with resolution 2231, adopted by the UN Security Council.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom ('the E3') note that the US ceased to be a participant to the JCPoA following their withdrawal from the deal on 8 May, 2018.

Consequently, the purported notification under paragraph 11 of UNSCR 2231 (2015), received from the United States of America and circulated to the UN Security Council Members, is incapable of having legal effect.

It flows from this that any decisions and actions which would be taken based on this procedure or on its possible outcome would also be incapable of having any legal effect.

We remain guided by the objective of upholding the authority and integrity of the United Nations Security Council. The E3 remains committed to fully implementing UNSCR 2231 (2015) by which the JCPoA was endorsed in 2015.

We have worked tirelessly to preserve the nuclear agreement and remain committed to do so."

[€5 million to help fight coronavirus in Iran: E3 statement, March 2020](#)

Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development 2 March 2020

Statement from the governments of France, Germany and the UK:

"France, Germany and the United Kingdom express their full solidarity with all impacted by COVID-19 in Iran. We are offering Iran a comprehensive package of both material and financial support to combat the rapid spread of the disease.

The material will be transported urgently by plane on March 2 and will include equipment for laboratory tests, as well as other equipment, including protective body suits and gloves.

The E3 has also committed to providing urgent additional financial support close to €5 million to fight the COVID-19 epidemic affecting Iran, through the WHO or other UN agencies.

We will continue to support global efforts to combat the outbreak of COVID-19. Our support is directed to help the most vulnerable across the globe."

4. PQs

[Assadollah Assadi](#)

02 Dec 2020 | HL10525

Asked by: Lord Maginnis of Drumglass

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Iran about reports that that government has threatened to retaliate against the government of Belgium if Assadollah Assadi is found guilty of participating in preparations for bombing an international gathering near Paris in June 2018.

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

We are aware of media reports that an Iranian diplomat, who is charged with involvement in a plot against a conference in Paris in 2018, has threatened "retaliation" should he be convicted. The UK Government does not have access to the court documents on which these reports are based. While the legal process is ongoing it would be inappropriate to comment further on these reports and we have not made specific representations to the Iranian Government. We are not aware of any reporting suggesting that the Government of Iran itself has made any threats to retaliate against the Government of Belgium.

[Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

25 Nov 2020 | 116599

Asked by: Tulip Siddiq

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has requested from the Iranian Government that representatives of the International Bar Association be allowed to attend (a) any future hearings of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in the Revolutionary Court and (b) hearings in the Revolutionary Court of any other British citizen.

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

We formally requested, by Note Verbale, the UK Government's attendance at Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's hearing on 2 November in order to support her but we were not permitted access. So far, we have, regrettably, never been granted access to Iranian judicial hearings for any of our dual British national detainees, but we continue firmly to lobby for access to them. We have not yet requested the International Bar Association to monitor any future hearings.

[Iran: Prisoners](#)

25 Nov 2020 | 116592

Asked by: Tulip Siddiq

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many British citizens in Iranian prisons

officials from the UK Embassy in Tehran have been able to visit since its reopening in 2015.

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

Since the reopening of the UK Embassy in Tehran in 2015, officials have not been able to visit dual British nationals detained or attend their trials. Iran does not recognise dual nationality nor grant consular access to our dual national detainees. We have repeatedly pressed, and will continue to press, for consular access and appropriate medical care. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office provides a range of assistance to dual British nationals detained in Iran and their families. We regularly lobby the Iranians on health concerns and mistreatment allegations - and for the immediate and permanent release of all arbitrarily detained dual British nationals in Iran

[Iran: Terrorism](#)

19 Nov 2020 | 115596

Asked by: Toby Perkins

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to his counterpart in Iran on allegations that country intended to bomb an Iranian opposition party rally in Paris in 2018.

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

We are aware of the ongoing trial of four Iranians in Belgium in relation to the 2018 plot against a conference in Paris. We are deeply concerned by reports that an Iranian diplomat is one of those standing trial in connection with the incident. While the legal process is ongoing, however, it would be inappropriate to comment further and we have not made specific representations to the Iranian Government. The UK strongly condemns the targeting of civilians and welcomes steps taken to hold those responsible to account. We continue to work closely with our European partners on security and counter-terrorism issues. We are not aware at this stage of a link to the UK.

[Iraq: Foreign Relations](#)

10 Nov 2020 | HL9784

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government further to the Prime Minister's meeting with the Prime Minister of Iraq on 22 October, whether they have raised concerns over the competing influence of the governments of Iran and the United States in Iraq with the governments of those countries.

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

The UK remains committed to Iraq's sovereignty and ensuring that Iraq is able to govern effectively in the interests of its people. The Prime Minister underlined this support during his meeting with Prime Minister

Kadhimi on 22 October. The UK regularly engages with all partners of Iraq, including Iran and the United States, in order to support stability in Iraq and the wider region.

Detainees: Dual Nationality

09 Nov 2020 | 110249

Asked by: Bell Ribeiro-Addy

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made on reuniting (a) Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, (b) Anoosheh Ashoori and (c) other arbitrarily detained dual British nationals with their families.

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

HMG remains extremely concerned about all dual British nationals detained in Iran, including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori. Iran does not recognise dual nationality and therefore does not permit UK Government access to British-Iranian detainees. We continue to urge the Iranian Government immediately to release all dual British nationals arbitrarily detained in Iran to enable them to return to their families in the UK. The welfare of British-Iranian citizens in Iran is of paramount importance, and we call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to treat all detainees in line with international standards. We continue to raise all our dual British nationals' cases at the most senior levels, and discuss it at every opportunity with our Iranian counterparts. The Foreign Secretary has done so repeatedly with Foreign Minister Zarif. We raised their cases again when we summoned the Iranian Ambassador on 29 October, and our Ambassador in Tehran consistently raises all our dual national detainees with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Iran: UN Arms Embargo

08 Oct 2020 | 806 c701-705

Asked by: Lord Polak

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to support an extension of the United Nations arms embargo on the government of Iran.

My Lords, in begging leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper, I refer the House to my registered interests.

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, the UN arms embargo on Iran is due to expire on 18 October. We remain committed to countering Iranian proliferation to non-state actors. The EU's arms embargo and the UN ballistic missile restrictions will remain in place, as will other prohibitions on the proliferation of weapons to Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen.

Asked by: Lord Polak

Our abstention on extending the UN arms embargo was an error of judgment. China and Russia were always going to veto, to support Iran. Those three countries are not known for honouring gentlemen's agreements. We should have voted with the US, to make it clear that we oppose Iran accessing arms through the legitimacy of the UN but, sadly, we chose to leave the US exposed and lonely when, in truth, we agree with it. There are 10 days before the expiry. Will my noble friend the Minister to take a lead and do what we know is right? If not, will he explain our policy going forward? How are we going to stop the spread of arms to the terror-supporting Iran?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, I share with my noble friend the intention to stop the destabilising influence of Iran. The United Kingdom abstained because the resolution could not attract the support of the council, and therefore did not represent a basis for achieving consensus. He asked about the way forward. We are addressing systematic Iranian non-compliance. Iran must engage seriously with our concerns, and I know that my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary has asked the High Representative of the EU, Josep Borrell, to convene a ministerial joint commission as soon as possible. On what else the UK is doing, we sought to facilitate dialogue between the two positions to achieve a desired outcome. However, as I said earlier, sanctions remain, both from the EU and through the UN ballistic restrictions on Iran.

Asked by: Lord Browne of Ladyton

My Lords, I declare my registered interest as chair of the European Leadership Network. This is all about the JCPOA and the US Administration's desire to destroy it, or to make it difficult for a Biden Administration to recant it. The Minister knows of my support for the Government's policy on the JCPOA: Iran not having a nuclear weapon is a priority for our security. Does the Minister agree that however we may otherwise support arms embargo sanctions on Iran—which we do—we cannot fight to keep the JCPOA alive and at the same time impose an arms embargo relating to the treaty itself?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for his support. While the JCPOA is far from perfect, it remains the only agreement on the table. We continue to press with our E3 partners on this issue to ensure that it is sustained, to prevent Iran becoming a nuclear state in any sense. We also remain committed to Resolutions 2216 and 1701 of the Security Council, which prevent further exporting of arms, as well as the other sanctions from the EU and on ballistics that I have already alluded to.

Asked by: Baroness Northover

My Lords, I hope that the Minister will answer both my questions. Has the United Kingdom said anything to the United States about the importance of adhering to international agreements? Secondly, given the volatility of the region, does he agree that very active involvement with Iran is required to build on the JCPOA?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, on the second question of the noble Baroness, I have already referred to the fact that we are working with E3 partners and with High Representative Borrell on that very issue. On adhering to international agreements, the JCPOA was agreed by all and we were disappointed by the United States' leaving it, but it is important, in order for it to remain on the table, that Iran fulfils its obligations.

Asked by: Lord Lamont of Lerwick

My Lords, I draw the House's attention to the register of interests and my role as the trade envoy to Iran. While I totally agree that there are many legitimate criticisms to be made of Iran's behaviour, if we want stability in the region is it not important to recognise that Iran has its own legitimate security concerns, having been—within living memory—invaded by its Arab neighbour and having lost more lives than we lost in the whole of the Second World War? Given that, if we really want Iran not to want to buy more weapons, should we not be more careful about selling weapons into the region—to Iran's heavily-armed Arab neighbours, some of whom have spent much more on weapons than Iran?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, I agree with my noble friend, and I have said repeatedly that our challenge and our opposition are not directed at the Iranian people. It is a rich culture, whether it is Persian, Arab, Turk, Baluch or Kurd—the list goes on. On his wider point about exports of arms to the region, when making any arms sales we engage one of the most rigid processes, and we ask other countries to adopt similar measures.

Asked by: Baroness Deech

My Lords, I refer to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. There is no doubt that Iran has not observed it, and the United States has called for snapback sanctions. Will the Government comply with these, and how, otherwise, will they ensure that Iran's nuclear ambitions are blocked?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, I agree with the point made by the noble Baroness about ensuring that we curb Iran's nuclear ambitions. That is why it is important that we keep the JCPOA—an imperfect agreement, I accept, but the only one on the table—and work to ensure that Iran adheres to it.

Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury

On that precise point—how we keep the JCPOA alive—will the Minister say what practical steps he is taking with our EU partners, particularly as part of the E3, to bring it back to the table and to get agreement, with a view, in particular, to avoiding some of the sanctions? What is happening to INSTEX and the special purpose vehicle—has it worked?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, I assure the noble Lord that we are working with our E3 partners, as he has suggested. On INSTEX, a number of countries have come on board. It was set up so that important sectors such as healthcare could be dealt with, which is particularly important in the current coronavirus crisis, and—I can confirm—the first transaction under INSTEX has already taken place.

Asked by: Baroness Smith of Newnham

My Lords, the Minister said that the United Kingdom abstained at the UN because there was not going to be agreement. Is that not a dangerous precedent: surely that would be true of many decisions taken at the UN? Should the UK not be voting?

Answering Member: Lord Ahmad | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, as Ministers at the UN we often take a decision to abstain. It is very rare for us to veto any resolution: it should be a last resort. On this issue, the Security Council resolution is valid, and can go forward, only if all P5 members agree to it, and we will continue to work with permanent members of the Security Council to find a resolution.

[USA: Iran](#)**05 Oct 2020 | HL8464****Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of the United States since 21 September to discuss that government's (1) policy towards, and (2) sanctions on, Iran.

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

The UK regularly discusses with the US a variety of issues related to Iran, including our shared concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, Iran's destabilising activities in the region and the various sanctions programmes targeting Iran. These discussions take place at all levels of government, including recently during the Foreign Secretary's visit to Washington in early September.

[Iran: Arms Trade](#)**30 Sep 2020 | 93687****Asked by: Dr Jamie Wallis**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the upcoming expiry of the UN conventional arms embargo on Iran.

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

The UK has been clear that the scheduled expiry of the UN conventional arms embargo in October 2020 would have major implications for

regional security and stability. The UK Government continue to engage regional partners, the US, and others, to find a solution to Iranian proliferation in the region, whilst upholding the authority and integrity of the UN Security Council. In the meantime, the EU arms embargo and UN ballistic missile restrictions on Iran will remain in place until at least 2023. We will also continue to enforce sanctions regimes including those under UNSCRs 1540, 1701, and 2216 which prohibit the proliferation of weapons to Lebanese Hizballah and the Houthis in Yemen. The UK encourages all states to implement national export control best practice in support of these regimes.

Iran: Human Rights

21 Sep 2020 | 89680

Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the Amnesty International report entitled *Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's 2019 November protests*, published 2 September 2020.

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

The findings in Amnesty International's report about the November 2019 protests are deeply worrying. Iran's human rights record continues to be of serious concern to the UK. As we said at the time, we unreservedly support the right to peaceful protest, and call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to protect freedom of assembly and speech. The UK is committed to holding Iran to account on a wide range of human rights issues, through contact with the Iranian Government and internationally through the UN and our likeminded partners. We regularly raise human rights with the Iranians at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues.

(* [Trampling humanity: Mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran's 2019 November protests](#), Amnesty International, 1 September 2020)

Iran: Israel

05 Aug 2020 | HL7172

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the [comment by the Foreign Minister of Israel on 5 July](#) that in regard to Iran "we take actions that are better left unsaid"; and when they last discussed with the government of Israel their policy towards the government of Iran.

Answering member: Baroness Sugg | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK and Israel share a strong partnership, and we regularly discuss regional issues with the Government of Israel, including their policy towards Iran. We continue to urge de-escalation and dialogue in the region.

(*Link provided by compiler)

[China: Iran](#)**24 Jul 2020 | 76002****Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on regional stability of reports that Iran has signed a 25-year strategic agreement with China.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The reports in the press that Iran and China have agreed a 25-year strategic agreement are premature. Iranian authorities, including Foreign Minister Zarif, have stated publicly that any agreement between the two countries has yet to be finalised and that negotiations are still ongoing. Details of the potential agreement are still emerging, and it is too early to make an assessment of any possible effects on wider regional stability.

[Iran: Detainees](#)**21 Jul 2020 | 74549****Asked by: Lisa Nandy**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports from British-Iranian detainees in Tehran's Evin prison of serious human rights abuses and poor living conditions in that facility; and whether he plans to raise those reports with his Iranian counterpart.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We consistently raise all of our dual national detainees cases with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We regularly request consular access to all our dual-national prisoners to ensure that they are treated in accordance with international standards and that their welfare needs are met.

[Iran: Capital Punishment](#)**10 Jul 2020 | 68330****Asked by: Dr Matthew Offord**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on the

imposition of the death penalty against Amir-Hossein Moradi, Saeed Tamjidi and Mohammad Rajabi.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Iran's human rights record continues to be of serious concern to the UK. We remain deeply concerned by Iran's failure to uphold its international legal obligations. The continued use of the death penalty, weak rule of law and restrictions on freedoms of expression are deeply worrying. It remains a long-standing policy of the United Kingdom to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle. While we have not made representations on these particular cases, the UK regularly raises human rights with the Iranian authorities at all levels. We unreservedly support the right to peaceful protest, and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues.

[Iran: Coronavirus](#)

02 Jun 2020 | HL4591

Asked by: Lord Campbell of Pittenweem

To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the US government on facilitating the supply of humanitarian relief to the government of Iran for the treatment of Iranian citizens with COVID-19.

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

The UK, along with France and Germany (the E3), have expressed their full solidarity with all impacted by COVID-19 in Iran. We are working with the international community to ensure that Iran receives the humanitarian support it needs: the E3 have provided a EUR 5 million package of financial and material assistance to Iran via the World Health Organisation and UN bodies to help with the response. We also continue to engage the US on a range of policy matters relating to Iran, including how the international community can best support the Iranian Government's response to the COVID-19 crisis in Iran. We welcome the new US Treasury factsheet issued on 16th April summarising the humanitarian exemptions to sanctions against Iran and offering additional guidance for individuals and governments.

[Asylum: Iran](#)

18 May 2020 | 6159

Asked by: Cat Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what her policy is on the return of rejected asylum seekers to Iran.

Answering member: Chris Philp

The UK has a proud history of granting asylum to those who need our protection.

All asylum and human rights claims are carefully considered on their individual merits in accordance with our international obligations under

the Refugee Convention and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Each individual assessment is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant caselaw. Our assessment of the situation in Iran is set out in the relevant country policy and information notes, which are available on the Gov.uk website.

The Home Office only enforces removal to Iran when it and the courts conclude that it is safe to do so, with a safe route of return. By definition, those whose asylum claim have been unsuccessful do not need protection and are not at risk on return.

Enforced removals are carried out in the most sensitive way possible, treating those being removed with respect and courtesy.

[Iran: Palestinians](#)

24 Mar 2020 | HL2356

Asked by: Lord Polak

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the government of Iran's (1) involvement in, and (2) policy of, encouraging peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

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

Iran continues to support a number of militant and proscribed groups in the region, such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Palestinian rejectionist groups. This support is concerning, and directly undermines prospects for regional security and lasting peace in the region. 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. We will continue to work with likeminded partners to advance the Middle East Peace Process, countering those who embrace violence.

[International Military Services: Iran](#)

04 Feb 2020 | 8410

Asked by: Tulip Siddiq

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the Answer of 20 November 2018 to [Question 185141](#), whether any of the Iranian delegation detained in 2013 when coming to discuss IMS Ltd's debt remain incarcerated in the UK.

Answering member: Brandon Lewis | Home Office

It is longstanding policy not to disclose details of records which may be held in relation to individuals' arrival in the United Kingdom, as to do so would not be in the interests of national security.

[Iran: Nuclear Power](#)

30 Jan 2020 | 7618

Asked by: Robert Halfon

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what his policy is on proposals to redraft the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to include provisions to curtail Iran's international aggression and financing of terrorism.

Answering member: Dr Andrew Murrison | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the best means available to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. We remain committed to the deal and urge Iran to return to full compliance immediately. We, along with France and Germany, have made clear that we want to build on the JCPOA with a long-term successor that includes regional security issues and Iran's ballistic missile programme. The UK remains determined to work with Iran on a diplomatic way forward and believes discussion on these issues should take place while the current nuclear deal remains in place.

[Iran: British Nationals Abroad](#)

27 Jan 2020 | 6741

Asked by: Tulip Siddiq

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what plans he has to take forward with Iran the policy of diplomatic protection invoked in the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe following the increased risk of arbitrary detention and abuse of UK citizens and embassy staff in that country.

Answering member: Andrew Stephenson | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Exercising diplomatic protection in Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case has formally raised her case to a state-to-state issue. We continue to lobby the Iranian Government at the most senior levels for Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's unconditional release so she can be reunited with her family.

[Iran: Electronic Warfare](#)

13 Jan 2020 | 1377

Asked by: Dan Jarvis

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to protect the UK from Iranian-backed cyber-attacks.

Answering member: Anne-Marie Trevelyan | Ministry of Defence

Cyber is a tier 1 threat and remains a national priority. [The National Cyber Security Strategy](#), published on 1 November 2016, sets out ambitious policies to protect the UK in cyber space, supported by a £1.9 billion transformational investment. Our vision for 2021 is that the UK is secure and resilient to cyber threats, prosperous and confident in the digital world.

To operate and defend our networks and provide worldwide assured communications for defence, our Global Operations and Security Control Centre at Ministry of Defence Corsham is operational 24/7, equipped with sophisticated cyber defence capabilities.

(*Link provided by compiler)

5. Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Debates

[Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

12 Mar 2020 | 673 cc177-200WH

[Persecution of Christians](#)

06 Feb 2020 | 671 cc507-550

[Iran: Stability in the Middle East](#)

30 Jan 2020 | 801 cc1554-1568

[Drones: International Law](#)

16 Jan 2020 | 801 cc852-864

5.2 Urgent Questions

[Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe](#)

Urgent question on Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

03 Nov 2020 | 683 cc185-196

[Iran](#)

Urgent question on the security situation in Iran.

13 Jan 2020 | 669 cc750-764

5.3 Statements

[Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action](#)

Statement on the Iran nuclear agreement known as the joint comprehensive plan of action.

14 Jan 2020 | 669 cc1482-8

[Middle East: Security](#)

Statement on the security situation in the Middle East.

07 Jan 2020 | 669 cc253-274

5.4 Early Day Motions

[Iran's Document on Judicial Security](#)

EDM 1121 (session 2019-21)

Jim Shannon

11 Nov 2020

That this House welcomes the document on judicial security signed by Iran's judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi; notes the pledges contained within it to ban torture, the use of forced confessions, solitary confinement, illegal police detentions, and other violations of defendants' rights;

further welcomes the guaranteed consular access for foreign nationals as an indication of progression for human rights in Iran; and urges the Iranian Government and security forces to implement those changes as a matter of urgency.

[Death penalty sentences against protestors in Iran](#)

EDM 918 (session 2019-21)

Margaret Ferrier

23 Sep 2020

That this House is shocked by the execution of champion wrestler, Navid Afkari and the alarming frequency of death penalty sentences being handed down to those involved in anti-Government protests in 2018 and 2019 in Iran; notes with alarm that the execution of Mr. Afkari is the second recent execution in connection with those protests and that his trial was held behind closed doors and allegedly relied on forced confessions extracted under torture; echoes the call of UN human rights experts earlier this month to the Iranian Government to immediately halt all executions of protestors sentenced to death; and calls on the Government to raise relevant concerns with the Iranian Government as a matter of urgency to ensure that the death penalty is imposed only for the most serious crimes and after proceedings meeting the highest level of respect for fair trial and due process standards.

[Human rights in Iran](#)

EDM 821 (session 2019-21)

Bob Blackman

01 Sep 2020

That this House condemns the Iranian regime's failure to uphold its international obligations and demands recognition for the basic principles of human rights including freedom of religion and belief and comply with the basic rules of international law; expresses serious concern about the recent threats of security agents against the life of Dr Azmayesh which have been published online by agents of the Iranian regime; and calls on the Government to make representations to the Iranian Government that given the records of assassinations and terrorist activities of the Iranian regime outside of Iran, it is crucial to stop these activities, as the failure to do so will only lead to more deaths and further victimization of citizens.

[Iran nuclear deal](#)

EDM 202 (session 2019-21)

Alistair Carmichael

24 Feb 2020

That this House recognises that the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was a landmark agreement providing a comprehensive, negotiated solution for limiting the Iranian nuclear programme, contributing to peace and stability in the surrounding region, and showcasing cooperation between Iran and the P5+1; is deeply concerned by the decision of 8 May 2018 by the President of the United States of America to withdraw the US from the JCPOA; calls on the

Government to use its influence in Washington to urge the US to reconsider its approach to the JCPOA and to uphold its obligation to the deal; and further calls on the Government to maintain its commitment to the deal as outlined in the E3 Statement of 12 January 2020.

Freedom of religious belief in Iran

EDM 209 (session 2019-21)

Mary Glendon

24 Feb 2020

That this House notes the increasing importance of defence of freedom of religion of belief in UK foreign policy; further notes the arrest of 24 members of the Baha'i faith in Iran in October and November 2019; and calls on the Government to press Iranian authorities to cease its targeting of Baha'is and other religious minorities on account of their beliefs.

6. Further reading

[Iran and Stability in the Middle East](#), Lords Library Briefing, 23 January 2020

[What now for the Iran nuclear deal?](#) Commons Research Briefing, 15 January 2020

[Iraq, Iranian influence and the death of Soleimani](#), Commons Research Briefing, 6 January 2020

[The Iran nuclear deal and rising tensions in the Gulf](#), Commons Research Briefing, 1 October 2019

[Human Rights and Democracy: The 2019 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report](#), Foreign and Commonwealth Office, July 2020
(*Page 47)

[Human Rights Watch 2019 country report – Iran](#)

[All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief – Iran](#)

[Amnesty international – Iran](#)

[Human Rights Watch – Iran](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group on Iran](#)

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