



EAPPI|UK & Ireland

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

UK and Ireland Annual Report 2019



Britain Yearly Meeting, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) | Registered Charity 1127633
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EAPPI UK and Ireland

Quakers in Britain are honoured to host EAPPI UK and Ireland on behalf of Churches Together in Britain. Staff in the Quaker Peace and Social Witness Team manage this work, liaising with all our partners.

Partners in 2019

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Introduction

This report provides a review of the outputs, outcomes and achievements of the EAPPI UK and Ireland office during 2019.

EAPPI is an international programme coordinated by the World Council of Churches (WCC). It brings people from around the world to the West Bank to serve for three months as human rights monitors, or Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs).

EAPPI in the UK and Ireland is a joint project of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and other agencies. EAPPI UK and Ireland is administered by Quakers in Britain and managed by staff in our Quaker Peace and Social Witness team.



Photo credit: EAPPI

EAPPI vision and mission

EAPPI's vision is a future in which the military occupation of Palestine (the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza) has ended and both Palestinians and Israelis enjoy a just peace with freedom, dignity and security based on international law.

EAPPI's mission is to witness life under occupation, engage with local Palestinians and Israelis pursuing a just peace, and work to change the international community's involvement with the conflict, urging them to act against injustice in the region.

The programme

EAPPI recruits ordinary people from the UK and Ireland to live alongside communities working non-violently against the military occupation. EAs range in age from 25 to 70 years old and are from many different backgrounds, but what they all share is a deep dedication to human rights.

EAPPI uses the internationally recognised model of 'accompaniment' as the framework for what we do. This model is guided by International Humanitarian Law and requires both a strategic local presence, and international pressure in order to be effective.

There are four strands of accompaniment:

- Protective presence.
- Monitoring of human rights violations.
- Standing in solidarity with local peace and human rights groups.
- Advocacy.

Principled Impartiality

EAPPI is guided by principled impartiality. This means it is neither pro-Palestinian nor pro-Israeli and does not take sides in the conflict. EAPPI is pro-human rights and pro-international law.

Key Outcome 1: The protective presence of EAs has enhanced the safety of Palestinians in target communities

Trained EAs in the field

In 2019, 20 trained EAs from the UK and Ireland served as human rights observers in the West Bank. EAs served in seven West Bank locations: Tulkarm, Bethlehem, South Hebron Hills, Yanoun, Jerusalem, Hebron and Jordan Valley. They joined EAs from 18 other countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA.

EAs attended a preparation training course in the UK and Ireland before beginning their service in the field. EAs began their term in the field with orientation training in Jerusalem and at their various team locations. EAs also participated in a mid-term training week, which introduced EAs to aspects of Israeli life, including visits to Yad Vashem and a synagogue as well as meetings with Israeli peace and human rights organisations, settlers and students. EAs from the UK and Ireland also spent a weekend with members of a synagogue in Haifa.

EA outputs: providing protective presence to vulnerable communities

Each week, approximately 10,000 people affected by the occupation were supported by EAs as they went about their daily lives. International EA groups provided a protective presence to vulnerable communities in the following ways during 2019:

1. Being present at checkpoints to report overcrowding and support vulnerable people who are struggling in the queues; such as elderly people and women with young children (408 recorded occasions).
2. Supporting access to education by walking with children to their schools or being present at checkpoints leading to schools (603 recorded occasions).
3. Supporting farmers to access their land by providing a protective presence to shepherds (404 recorded occasions) or being present at agricultural gates (506 recorded occasions).
4. Reporting on settler attacks and offering practical support to affected communities.
5. Supporting vulnerable communities under threat of demolition. EAs attended 145 demolitions in 2019, which altogether affected 901 people.

EAs also supported the nonviolent activism of Israelis and Palestinians working to end the occupation, and monitored human rights abuses committed by settlers and the military. EAs contributed to 671 serious incident reports, affecting 23,167 people during 2019. These reports are used by the UN and other NGOs to co-ordinate support and resources to West Bank communities.

EA outcomes: enhanced safety for local communities

EAs keep a record of each type of activity they carry out which gives an idea of the scope of their impact. In addition, EAPPI's



EAs attending a home demolition.
Photo credit: EAPPI/EA Michael

unique and continuous proximity to vulnerable communities means that we can regularly collect personal feedback on the impact of EAs on the ground. Outcomes achieved by the protective presence of EAs and feedback from local communities during 2019 is included below.

1. People passing through checkpoints have experienced improved humanitarian conditions and received direct support from EAs

Tens of thousands of Palestinian workers are required to pass through military checkpoints to get to work in Israel. Palestinians also have to pass through checkpoints to access vital services such as medical care, schools, and places of worship. EAPPI monitoring has revealed that conditions at these checkpoints are poor, with toilet facilities and the humanitarian gate regularly closed and overcrowding very common.

In 2019, EAs helped to improve humanitarian conditions at checkpoints by reporting overcrowding. The protective presence of EAs has also helped to reduce the abuse of Palestinian rights and support Palestinians to move more freely through checkpoints. Some examples include:

- EA John reported severe crushing at a checkpoint in Bethlehem, leading to Israeli soldiers opening the humanitarian line and allowing elderly people, people with disabilities and women to come forward and pass. All serving EAs in Bethlehem and Jerusalem reported similar stories of action being taken by soldiers to improve conditions at Checkpoint 300 and Qualandia in 2019, following direct contact with them; either face to face or via the humanitarian line.
- EA Michael persuaded a soldier in Tulkarm to keep an agricultural gate open for a Palestinian farmer who was at risk of being too late to cross the gate, having to spend the night on the wrong side of the barrier, and losing his permit. The farmer was hurrying down the track just before the closing time of 4pm and the soldiers began closing the gate, but Michael intercepted and persuaded them to keep it open.
- EA John reported giving the phone number for Machsom Watch to a Palestinian woman who was refused access through Checkpoint 300. Machsom Watch is an Israeli peace organisation that helps Palestinians to challenge checkpoint bans. The next time John saw the woman, she approached him to thank him for the referral - Machsom Watch had helped her resolve the issues and she was now able to pass through the checkpoint.
- A woman in Bethlehem told EA Lesley that the checkpoint queues had been much worse during the week that EAs were away attending their mid-term training week. The woman told Lesley that she'd been late for work several times that week due to the queues and had received a written warning from her employer as a result. She told Lesley that it was much easier to pass through the checkpoint when EAs were present.

2. Children have been supported to access their school and have experienced reduced harassment from settlers and Israeli soldiers

Palestinian children's access to education is heavily impacted by the occupation. It is not unusual for schoolchildren to witness or experience violence and harassment at the hands of settlers or soldiers on their way to school, which can impact their ability to concentrate in lessons. The uncertainty and unpredictability of the occupation also has a practical impact on education, leading to a high turnover of teaching staff and sometimes cutting class times short.

In 2019, EAs helped to reduce harassment and increase pupils' feeling of safety as they attend school; positively impacting their education. EAs monitored and supported access to education at 39 schools or checkpoints leading to schools during 2019. In total, 6,639 children and 611 members of school staff benefitted from this protective presence in 2019.



Palestinian children face soldiers on their route to school. Photo credit: EAPPI/EA Patricia

Some examples of the impact of EAs include:

- EA Michael was called upon to start monitoring a checkpoint north of Tulkarm. The barrier has been built on the Palestinian side, leaving some EAs in the seam zone. Children aged 8 to 15 have to travel through the checkpoint in three cars to reach their school on the other side. One of the drivers who takes the children asked EAs to start providing a protective presence here. The driver later told Michael that when EAs were present, the soldier waved the cars straight through, whereas previously they had made all of the children leave the cars to be searched. EAs now regularly attend this checkpoint, and data from the checkpoint is being used by UNICEF in their Access to Education project.
- A teacher at Al Minya School in Bethlehem told us that whenever EAs are present, Israeli soldiers stay across the road out of sight of the school. However, when EAs are not there, the soldiers come much closer to the school.

3. Farmers and shepherds are better able to access their land.

Many Palestinians rely on their land for their livelihoods and to provide food security for their families. Shepherds throughout the West Bank have the contact numbers for EAs and call upon them to support their access to agricultural land, particularly at crucial times such as planting and harvest.

Throughout 2019, farmers reported that incidents of settler violence were reduced by the protective presence of EAs and that they feel more confident to access their land. EA Svern reported on this in detail in his eyewitness blog, included overleaf.

4. Palestinian communities have experienced a reduction in settler violence

Many Palestinians live with the daily threat of psychological and physical violence, vandalism to their property, and abuse by visiting settlers and the military. In 2019, the protective presence of EAs helped to lessen the threats and vandalism experienced by Palestinians.

During 2019, EA Lucy received a request from a Palestinian farmer who lives near Havot Maon settler outpost. A cycle of settler harassment had begun, and for a number of consecutive nights, settlers began running around the farmer's home in the dark. The farmer was the only male in the home and was frightened for his wife, daughter and granddaughter. EAs started to provide protective presence outside his home, twice a week at randomised times, and the harassment stopped.

Providing protective presence to shepherds

In his [eyewitness blog](#), EA Svenn demonstrates how the protective presence of EAs has enabled Fawsi, a shepherd in Khirbet Samra, and his family to graze their flocks following harassment and limits on their access to land:

“Before the occupation things were good for us. We could go anywhere without being afraid. Even at night.” The feeling of injustice in Fawsi’s account is palpable. He and his brothers are only able to safely graze their flocks with the regular protective presence that EAPPI and our Israeli partner organization, Ta’ayush, provide them.

On our previous visit to the community, the shepherds were approached while out on the hills by five men and a boy from the outpost. They brought dogs with them and proceeded to aggressively chase the flock back to the ‘Palestinian side’ of the access road which links the outpost to the nearest military base. The road has become a de facto demarcation line in the ongoing struggle between the Palestinians and settlers over who has the right to graze the land. The settlers say that they own the land and often try to prevent the Palestinian shepherds from entering it with their flocks. Fawsi’s father has legal proof of ownership of the land and the family have filed multiple legal complaints but to no avail. This harassment goes largely unacted upon by the Israeli authorities.

The cost of this harassment is high for the shepherds. Not only does it force them to use more purchased feed to supplement the flock’s diet, many of the sheep at this time are pregnant. The stress of being chased at speed over rocky ground, on the occasion that we witnessed, caused nine lambs to be still-born; making a further dent in the next season’s budget and causing anguish to the shepherds who share a deep connection with the land and the animals they keep on it.



Settlers watch from the road to ensure the shepherds don't try to cross again
Photo credit: EAPPI / EA Svenn

Key Outcome 2: Government, inter-governmental and civil society groups (especially but not exclusively church related) are made aware of human rights abuses in the West Bank

Advocacy is a pillar of the EAPPI accompaniment model and is instrumental in making change happen. Palestinians and Israeli peace and human rights groups say that advocacy is the most effective action that EAs can take to end the occupation.

In 2019, the UK and Ireland EAPPI team delivered advocacy training to EAs, holding advocacy days in London, in March and October, and Dublin, in April and November. They also supported EAs to deliver talks to their local communities, secure meetings with elected officials and religious leaders, write blogs and engage in other creative forms of advocacy. Key advocacy outputs and outcomes in 2019 are detailed below:

Working with decision makers

EAs have worked closely with decision-makers before, during and after their three months service in order to effect changes in national policy to end the occupation. This includes meeting elected representatives (MPs, TDs, Senators, MEPs, MSPs and councillors) and non-elected officials. In 2019, EAs from the UK and Ireland:

- Held 49 meetings and logged 93 correspondences with elected representatives, including attending the annual EAPPI lobby of Brussels.
- Held 40 meetings and contacts with non-elected officials.
- Continued to carry out lobbying and strategy work to assist the Occupied Territories Bill through the Irish Parliament.

Issues raised by EAs with elected representatives included the settlement expansion and trade, settler and military violence, demolitions at Wadi Al Humus, the shooting of nine-year-old Abd a-Rahman a-Shteivi by the Israeli military, the expulsion of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), the impact of the occupation on Christians in the West Bank, children's rights, attacks on schools, the permit system, the demolition of an EU-funded footpath and the labelling of settlement products post-Brexit.

Working with faith leaders

In 2019, EAs held 47 meetings with religious leaders and churches. EAs in Ireland also sent an Easter letter to Christian worship leaders requesting that they speak out on the occupation and encourage their faith communities to take action.

Speaking engagements in local communities and media activity

EAs undertake speaking engagements in their local communities following their service to share their witness and encourage audiences to take action to end the occupation. In 2019, EAs logged 139 speaking engagements in their local communities. They also logged 29 media pieces including evening and local newspapers, local TV national magazine, local or regional radio.

Eyewitness blogs

EAs have raised awareness of human rights abuses by writing 37 eyewitness blogs in the period January-December 2019 (<https://eyewitnessblogs.com/>). These blogs have had 20,168 views. EAPPI has commitments from Bishops, MPs and other key influencers to read EAPPI blogs. The blogs have covered issues including:

- The demolition of Palestinian homes, schools and businesses.
- The confiscation of land and restrictions on farmers.
- Settler violence at schools and in local communities.
- Challenges facing Israeli peace groups protesting against the occupation.

Other advocacy activity

EAs also use other creative channels to raise public awareness of human rights violations in the West Bank. EAs logged 46 instances of other forms of advocacy in 2019, including meeting with a performance poet, setting up a twinning link, working with a playwright and actor, sharing witness at an international residential course for musicians, through song at a summer festival, and running workshops at a Jesuit training college.

Advocacy with Israeli communities

All British and Irish EAs visited the synagogue at Haifa for a weekend in the middle of their EAPPI placement. The aim of the visit was to promote a meaningful dialogue between EAs and Israelis. EAs were hosted by Israeli families, ate meals together, celebrated Shabbat and had facilitated conversations with adult congregants about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and with students who are just about to start their military conscription.

Advocacy outcomes: evidence of EAPPI influence

The work of EAs and UK and Ireland EAPPI staff has influenced decision makers, civil society groups and communities in the following ways during 2019:

- Elected representatives who met with EAs agreed to carry out a range of actions including; voting in favour of the Occupied Territories Bill, writing to the Middle East Minister, the Israeli Ambassador, and the European Commission High Representative, receiving EA blogs, tabling parliamentary questions, hosting an EA talk and introducing EAs to groups who may be interested in an EA talk.
- Following correspondence with an EA, Dr Sarah Wollaston, former MP, put forward a [written question](#) to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in October 2019 regarding the shooting of nine-year-old Palestinian, Abd a-Rahman a-Shteivi. A screenshot of this written question is included as an appendix to this report.
- Following letters sent by EAs to all Teachtaí Dálas (TDs) and Senators in Ireland, several TDs put forward [oral](#) and [written](#) questions in February 2019 concerning the expulsion of TIPH. Screenshots of these questions are included as an appendix to this report.
- Rabbis at the synagogue in Haifa reported that members and their families continue to deepen their understanding of the conflict as they hear EA eyewitness accounts. In 2012, the Haifa initiative found it difficult to engage Israelis families to host the EAs. In 2019 there was a waiting list of synagogue members wishing to host EAs. For the first time, there is interest from synagogue members to arrange a visit to the West Bank, something that would have seemed impossible until recently. EAs reported that rabbis said they had seen “big moves in some people’s thinking”. The synagogue’s rabbi also told us that this is the most significant piece of work that the synagogue does. In 2019, the programme expanded to include EAs from Switzerland in the weekend visits to Haifa - the first time EAs from another country have joined the weekend.

Alleviating the threat of settler violence

In her [eyewitness blog](#) EA Lucy tells how the protective presence of EAs has helped alleviate settler violence experiences by Palestinian Um Nasser and her family:

We're told by locals about an incident in 2003 during the second intifada – a time of heightened tension in Palestine and Israel. Two Israeli security men working for the local settlement were clearing nearby caves. Israeli soldiers were patrolling the area and thought that the security men were Palestinians, posing a security threat. In response, they shot and killed them both.



The memorial from Um Nasser's house.
Photo credit: EAPPI/EA Lucy

In memory of these two Israeli security officers, a monument was built near the site of the shooting. It was erected without the consent of Palestinians who live on the land. Now, every Friday morning at sunrise, which is 04.30 in the summer, Israeli settlers come with an armed military escort to visit this memorial. The visits can last three to four hours, sometimes overnight. Over the years, when trying to live her life and take care of her land, Um Nasser has endured psychological and physical threats and actions, vandalism to her property and abuse by the visiting settlers. The Israeli military have responded to this with impunity.

The family asked EAPPI for protective presence, which has helped to lessen the threats and vandalism they have experienced.

Supporting peaceful protest

In their joint [blog](#), EAs Marian and Mary demonstrate how the presence of EAs and other international agencies have helped one community to peacefully protest:

The area trapped between the Green Line and the separation barrier is known as the seam zone. The farms of many of Jaiyous villagers, including part of the farm of Shareef and Siham has been cut off from their home and lies within the seam zone.

Shareef tells us that the first indication that the Israeli authorities intended to construct the barrier in their area came in the form of a paper handwritten letter hanging from a branch on an olive tree which was noticed by a shepherd passing by with his sheep. This was in 2002. The notice stated that all of the villagers must go to a meeting with the Israeli military commander, who informed the villagers that the barrier would be positioned about six kilometres inside the Green Line. "Farmers cried at that meeting, knowing that it would destroy their livelihoods".

The villagers held about seventy demonstrations in the village that year. Shareef explained that the support and protective presence of international organisations including EAPPI gave the villagers encouragement to peacefully resist the construction of the barrier.

Challenges to EAPPI

Securing advocacy opportunities

EAs in the UK found it much harder to secure meetings or engage with MPs during 2019. This was primarily due to Brexit debates, votes, the summer recess/prorogation and the general election. With the government's focus on securing post-Brexit trade deals, many campaign groups have found it challenging to engage with elected representatives and officials on issues viewed as 'non-priority', such as Israel-Palestine.

Hebron

On 29 January, the World Council of Churches announced that it was withdrawing EAs from Hebron following the Israeli government's announcement that it was to ban TIPH and an increase in harassment against EAs in Hebron. A positive development from this challenge was an agreement between EAPPI and Rabbis for Human Rights to undertake joint protective presence walks in the centre of Hebron. This is the first engagement of its kind between an Israeli peace group and internationals in Hebron.

EAPPI developments

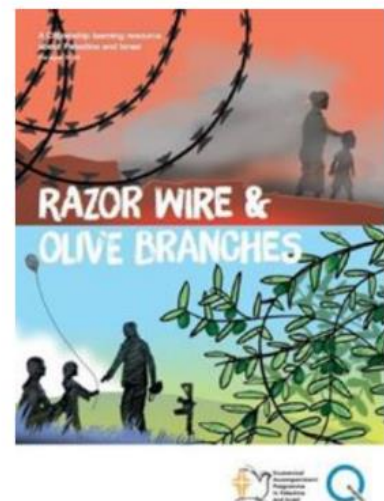
Jerusalem staffing updates

Following a long period of instability and staff vacancies, the Jerusalem office is now in a much healthier position. The arrival of new staff has have brought much-needed stability. The new members of staff are all experts in their field and the programme has already benefited from their considerable knowledge and experience.

Programme developments

A number of new initiatives were developed and implemented by the UK and Ireland EAPPI team in 2019, including:

- The publication of a major new educational resource pack - "Razor Wire and Olive Branches" - for teachers and students to support them to explore the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in schools.
- Holding the first Palestine Platform (PP) meeting with the new Middle East minister Andrew Murrison MP.
- The development of a new grouping of church and faith-related groups conducting advocacy on Israel-Palestine to share updates and work.
- Ongoing development of the Morally Responsible Campaign, including running a trial training session for grassroots campaigners and a steering group meeting on expanding the campaign.



Summary

In 2019, EAs have helped to improve the safety of vulnerable Palestinian communities by providing a protective presence, enabling children access to schools, helping farmers to access their land, and individuals to pass through checkpoints more easily. EAs from the UK and Ireland have successfully advocated for change with local communities, national representatives and faith groups. This has resulted in raised awareness of human rights abuses in the West Bank, in national political discussions and within faith communities in Israel.

We are extremely grateful for your support of this programme. We hope this report shows you the difference, and the impact your funding has made.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Beth Follini, Fundraising Manager on bethf@quaker.org.uk or on 020 7663 1117.



Photo credit: EAPPI

Appendix 1: Written question from Dr Sarah Wollaston

Screenshot of written question put forward in October 2019 Dr Sarah Wollaston, former MP, regarding the shooting of nine-year-old Palestinian, Abd a-Rahman a-Shteivi:

Question for **Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Abd a-Rahman a-Shteivi



To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make representations to the Israeli Government on conducting a criminal investigation into the alleged shooting by the Israeli Defence Force of a 9 year old Palestinian boy, Abd a-Rahman a-Shteivi on 12 July 2019.

Asked 16 October 2019



I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 2 October (PQ 291575). Our Embassy in Tel Aviv has raised the death of Abd a-Rahman with the Israeli authorities, stressing the importance of protecting civilians, especially children. The British Government is very concerned at the high numbers of Palestinian children killed and injured by Israel Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza. We have raised the issue of excessive use of force, including use of live ammunition with both the Office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and the Israeli Ministry of Defense. We will continue to encourage the Israeli authorities to carry out transparent investigations on the use of live fire.

Answered 21 October 2019

By [Dr Andrew Murrison](#) (Conservative, South West Wiltshire)

[^ Hide answer](#)

UIN 1015

[Named day](#)

[Answered](#)

[Commons](#)

Appendix 2: Written questions from TDs

Screenshots of written questions put forward in February 2019 by Irish TDs concerning the expulsion of TIPH:

Written Answers Nos. 65-84

Middle East Issues

65. Deputy Clare Daly asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** if the Israeli Government will be requested to reinstate the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron following its expulsion from the region (details supplied). [\[8781/19\]](#)

66. Deputy Clare Daly asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** if his attention has been drawn to the fact that observers from the ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel, EAPPI, have been withdrawn recently following a rise in harassment by settlers following the withdrawal of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, TIPH; and the steps he will take to request the Israeli Government for the reinstatement of both the TIPH and the EAPPI. [\[8782/19\]](#)

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 65 and 66 together.

I was deeply disappointed by Israel's announcement that the mandate for the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) would not be renewed. The TIPH, a civilian observer mission which was established in 1997 as part of United Nations Security Council Resolution 904 and the Oslo II accords, has played an important role in mitigating tension and conflict in Hebron. This conflict prevention mechanism has continued to meet a vital need, and no adequate reason has been given for the decision to end its mandate, which would seem to be a unilateral breach by Israel of the Oslo Accords.

The withdrawal of the international presence is likely to accentuate tensions on the ground in an already fragile situation in Hebron. Ireland regrets this decision and I call on Israel to reverse it. Ireland stands with the EU in stressing that Israel must fulfil its obligations under international law, as an occupying power, to protect the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. This decision will instead reduce those protections, leaving Palestinians more vulnerable to persistent attacks by settlers.

As the Deputy has noted, the observers from the ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) have also suffered from increasing settler attacks, and the withdrawal of the TIPH has now led the EAPPI to conclude that it too must withdraw its volunteers from Hebron. Many Irish volunteers have participated in the EAPPI programme over the years, and my Department has met with them from time to time, and values their work. Both the TIPH and the EAPPI in Hebron have been engaged in protecting children going to school from attacks by settlers, something which will have immediate resonance with Irish people. These children too are now under increased risk.

Ireland will continue to take a firm stance on matters relating to the Palestinian people and the Middle East Peace Process. At Israel's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council last year, Ireland raised the continued expansion of settlements, and urged that Israel abide by its international legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention, on the treatment of a civilian population under military occupation. I reiterated our concerns about these policies in my speech to the UN General Assembly in September. The Israeli authorities are well aware of our views, and we will certainly convey our specific concerns about the case of Hebron.

Written Answers Nos. 1-27

Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Middle East Issues

10. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** his views on the refusal by the Israeli Government to extend the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH); if his attention has been drawn to the work of TIPH in monitoring the breaches of a protocol (details supplied); if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that the work of the TIPH is enshrined in the Oslo II accords in 1995; and if the decision by the Israeli Government to refuse to extend the mandate of the TIPH will be condemned. [9634/19]

16. Deputy Gino Kenny asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** the steps he will take to have the Temporary International Presence in Hebron reinstated as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8900/19]

22. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** if he will report on the recent expulsion of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron from the region and the withdrawal of observers from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel; his plans to ensure that TIPH is reinstated; if he will report on his efforts to organise a meeting of representatives of Israel and Palestine here to advance a peace process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [8813/19]

23. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan asked the **Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade** if a commitment will be made for the return of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, West Bank in view of the deteriorating situation in the region and stated support for the Oslo Accords; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9689/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 10, 16, 22 and 23 together.

I was deeply disappointed by Israel's announcement that the mandate for the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) would not be renewed. The TIPH, a civilian observer mission which was established in 1997 as part of United Nations Security Council Resolution 904 and the Oslo II accords, has played an important role in mitigating tension and conflict in Hebron.

Observers have been sent from five contributing countries: Norway, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. The area of responsibility of the mission covers both the H1 and H2 areas of Hebron, the Palestinian and the Israeli-controlled areas.

This conflict prevention mechanism has continued to meet a vital need, and has promoted a feeling of security to the Palestinians of Hebron. No adequate reason has been given for the decision to end its mandate, which would seem to be a unilateral breach by Israel of the Oslo Accords.

The withdrawal of the international presence is likely to accentuate tensions on the ground in an already fragile situation in Hebron. Ireland regrets this decision and I call on Israel to reverse it. Ireland stands with the EU in stressing that Israel must fulfil its obligations under international law, as an occupying power, to protect the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. This decision will instead reduce those protections, leaving Palestinians more vulnerable to persistent attacks by settlers.

Subsequent to this announcement, the observers from a separate, non-governmental, protection mission that had been active in Hebron, the ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) has reportedly decided to halt its work in the H2 area of Hebron. This decision has been made following a number of serious incidents of harassment by Israeli settlers against its volunteers. EAPPI has been in existence since 2002, and has provided a feeling of protection, by means of their presence in vulnerable communities in the West Bank, particularly for communities at risk of forcible transfer, farmers at heightened risk of settler violence and to students and teachers in areas of the West Bank where safe access to school is not guaranteed.

The withdrawal of the TIPH has now led the EAPPI to conclude that it too must withdraw its volunteers from the H2 area of Hebron. Many Irish volunteers have participated in the EAPPI programme over the years, and my Department has met with them from time to time, and values their work.

Both the TIPH and the EAPPI in Hebron have been engaged in protecting children going to school from attacks by settlers, something which will have immediate resonance with Irish people. These children too are now under increased risk.

Ireland will continue to take a firm stance on matters relating to the Palestinian people and the Middle East Peace Process. At Israel's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council last year, Ireland raised the continued expansion of settlements, the establishment of which violates the rights of the occupied population, through seizure of their land, discriminatory treatment, house demolitions, revocation of residency, and differentiated application of planning laws. Ireland urged that Israel abide by its international legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention, on the treatment of a civilian population under military occupation.

I reiterated our concerns about these policies in my speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2018. The Israeli authorities are well aware of our views, and we will certainly convey our specific concerns about the case of Hebron.