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**Mr Hunt:** For the month that we looked at, September, we are talking about around 1,000 people arriving from the directly affected countries, which is about 0.03% of

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all Heathrow travellers for that month. It is important to say that the vast majority of those will be low-risk

passengers, but those are the people with whom, initially, we would want to have a conversation, so that we could understand whether they had been in contact with Ebola patients or had been in the areas particularly affected by Ebola, and so that we could decide whether we needed to put in place tracking procedures to allow us to contact them quickly, should they develop symptoms.

**Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab):** The Secretary of State may be aware that this weekend Lewisham hospital dealt with a suspected Ebola case. Thankfully, tests have shown that the individual is free from the virus, but may I press the Secretary of State further on the advice given to staff on the NHS front line? When was the guidance to NHS hospital and general practitioner receptionists sent out, and what steps have been taken to ensure that the guidance has been read and understood, and will be acted on?

**Mr Hunt:** First, on what happened in Lewisham hospital, the moment the individual was identified as a potential Ebola case, he was put into isolation. We learned, from what happened there, the importance of making sure that the guidance is widely understood. Making sure that everyone on the NHS front line knows what happens is an ongoing process. It is important to say, as I did in my statement, that the chief medical officer is satisfied that the arrangements in place right now are correct for the level of risk. The additional processes that I talked about are to make sure that we are ready for an increase in that risk.

**Mr Iain McKenzie (Inverclyde) (Lab):** Did I hear correctly that the Secretary of State said that 21 days is quite a lengthy time for the incubation of this particular disease? Will he commit to putting a further screening in place towards the end of that 21 days so that he can be assured that those entering the country are free of Ebola?

**Mr Hunt:** I am not sure that I entirely understood the hon. Gentleman's question, but the incubation period is 21 days, so if we identify through the screening and monitoring process someone who is higher risk, we will want to stay in touch with them for that period of 21 days on a daily basis to make sure that we are monitoring their temperature and that we get help to them as quickly as possible if they need it.

**Mr Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab):** I welcome the introduction of screening at various London locations, but what about Newcastle, which runs numerous flights every day to the airports that act as hubs for these west African countries, and obviously there is passage that way?

**Mr Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We have numerous ports of entry to the UK. We are one of the most international countries in the world, and London is one of the most international cities in the world, so the actions that we take must be proportionate to the risk. The risk is currently low, so the advice is that having no screening procedures at those airports is proportionate to the risk now, but we are taking this precautionary approach, starting with the Heathrow,

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Gatwick and Eurostar terminals, because we want to prepare for a possible increase in that level. Were that to happen we would of course look at whether that screening process should be expanded to regional airports.

**Andy Sawford (Corby) (Lab/Co-op):** In a recent film of medical workers treating people in west Africa with Ebola, a young doctor said that the one benefit of her protective mask was that people could not see her cry. Even as the media focus inevitably moves on, we know that this will go on for months and months ahead, so will the Secretary of State give us all an absolute assurance that we will continue, even though we cannot see her cry, to hear her voice and do whatever we can to help people in west Africa?

**Mr Hunt:** If that is the last question today, it is a fitting one on which to end. The hon. Gentleman is

absolutely right: this is an appalling human tragedy. There have been more than 4,000 deaths so far, in countries that are already, in many ways, the unluckiest countries in the world in terms of the levels of poverty that they already have to cope with daily. We can be incredibly proud of the 659 NHS volunteers, and the military, diplomatic and development staff who are stepping up to the plate, and we should always remember our humanitarian responsibility never to forget those countries' plight.

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## **Scotland within the UK**

4.52 pm

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alistair Carmichael):** With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement to the House about the position of Scotland within the United Kingdom.

As hon. Members will know, on 18 September the people of Scotland voted in a referendum on independence. I am pleased to report to the House that, by a margin of 10.6%, or by 55.3% to 44.7%, the people of Scotland voted to remain part of the United Kingdom.

The referendum was underpinned by the Edinburgh agreement, signed between the United Kingdom Government and the Scottish Government in October 2012. That agreement ensured that the referendum would have a clear legal base, that it would be conducted in a way that commanded the confidence of both Parliaments, Governments and people, and, most importantly, that it would deliver a fair, legal and decisive expression of the views of people in Scotland—a result that everyone would respect.

More than 2 million people made a positive choice for Scotland to remain part of the United Kingdom. The franchise for the referendum included, for the first time ever in this country, 16 and 17-year-olds. At a time when our elections have suffered from declining participation, the turnout across Scotland was nearly 85%—something that I am sure all across the House would welcome. Politics works best when people take an active interest in supporting the things that matter to them most. It also adds emphasis to the democratic result.

The decision of the people of Scotland was clear: they voted to continue to be part of this family of nations; they voted to continue to work alongside people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and they voted for all of us to remain together as a United Kingdom. It is important that everyone now accepts that result. We should all move on from being part of the 55% or the 45% to working for 100% of the people of Scotland.

That is what we are doing. The vow made by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition during the referendum campaign is already being put into practice. The Smith commission, chaired by Lord Smith of Kelvin, was up and running on 19 September. He will convene cross-party talks to reach agreement on the proposals for further devolution to Scotland. His terms of reference make it clear that the recommendations will deliver more financial, welfare and taxation powers, strengthening the Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom. But that process is not just about the parties; the referendum opened up civic engagement in Scotland across sectors, communities and organisations, and Lord Smith has made it clear that he wants to hear from all those groups to ensure that the recommendations he produces are informed by views from right across Scottish society.

By St Andrew's day, Lord Smith will publish "Heads of Agreement". The Government are committed to turning those recommendations into draft clauses by Burns night 2015. The timetable is demanding, but that is because the demand is there in Scotland to see change delivered, and it is a demand we shall meet.

On Friday 10 October, all five main Scottish parties submitted their proposals to the commission. In the case of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, the

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proposals reflect the positions published by the parties prior to the referendum campaign. The Scottish National party and the Green party agreed to join the cross-party talks after the referendum, and they too submitted proposals on Friday—a development that we welcome.

Today I can confirm that the Government are meeting the first step in the further devolution process by publishing a Command Paper. The Command Paper we are presenting today provides a clear, factual summary of the proposals for further devolution in Scotland published by each of the three pro-UK parties, as we committed to do during the referendum campaign. Those plans encompass a broad, complex and often interlinked range of topics, from taxation to borrowing and from welfare to regulation. To inform and assist consideration of each of those proposals, the Command Paper also sets out factual information about the current situation in the key policy areas, as well as presenting some background information about devolution in Scotland to date. The publication is wholly without prejudice to the work of the Smith commission, which will look at proposals from all the parties and others and seek to establish the ground for consensus. This will be the first time in the development of Scotland's constitutional future that all its main parties are participating in a process to consider further devolution. It is a truly historic moment, and one that I very much welcome.

With all five main Scottish parties working together in collaboration, I am confident that we will reach an agreement that will provide the enhanced powers to the people of Scotland and accountability for the Scottish Parliament while retaining the strength and benefits of being part of the United Kingdom. That was the message heard loud and clear during the referendum campaign, and it is one that this Government, and all Scotland's political parties, are committed to supporting.

**4.58 pm**

**Margaret Curran (Glasgow East) (Lab):** I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement.

Only three weeks ago, in unprecedented numbers, the people of Scotland voted to remain part of the United Kingdom. It was an historic decision, and the result was emphatically clear: the Scottish people voted for pooling and sharing resources across the United Kingdom; they voted to continue with devolution; and they voted for a stronger Scottish Parliament. I wish today to pay particular tribute to my right hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling) and for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Mr Brown), who put the case with so much passion throughout the campaign.

Following the referendum, we can say with confidence that devolution is the settled will of the Scottish people and that we shall have a stronger Scottish Parliament. A vital part of the campaign was the commitment made by the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to have a strengthened and empowered Scottish Parliament. Led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath, we guaranteed a clear and definitive timetable for further powers, and I am pleased that the Secretary of State has published the Command Paper ahead of time today. Can the Secretary of State confirm that a motion now appears on the Order Paper detailing that timetable?

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The process now ongoing under the leadership of Lord Smith of Kelvin will guarantee that more powers

will come to the Scottish Parliament. The Labour party will enter the talks this week in a spirit of partnership and co-operation with the other parties. We will apply a simple test to reaching a conclusion: what outcome respects the result of the referendum and will make the people of Scotland better off? The people of Scotland have voted for pooling, sharing of resources and greater prosperity, and that should guide the commission's discussions.

The referendum attracted the highest level of participation of any national poll ever held in Scotland. It is important that, as we develop this next stage of devolution, we reflect that. The Secretary of State has mentioned how voluntary organisations can participate. Will he lay out how individual members of the public can contribute to that process too and tell the House how Lord Smith intends to engage with people across every area of Scotland?

We debated the agreement for the referendum two years ago, as the Secretary of State said. At that time, I said that we would spend the campaign vigorously defending devolution from those who would seek to bring it to an end. Over these last two years, that is exactly what the Labour party has done. Not only does this campaign conclude with the devolution settlement secured; that settlement will be strengthened. We will continue to argue that the best future for Scottish people comes from pooling and sharing resources inside the United Kingdom and from a powerhouse Parliament that can again change the lives of people across Scotland. That is what the people of Scotland want, and it is what the Labour party will fight for.

**Mr Carmichael:** I thank the hon. Lady for the very constructive tone of her response. Working with people across parties has been an interesting experience, as it always is in Scotland, and it is clear that the process of cross-party working will have to continue if the will of the Scottish people expressed on 18 September is to be honoured. That will become all the more challenging, although I still believe it will be more effective as a result, for having members of the Scottish National party and Scottish Green party on board. A high price will be paid by any political party that does not enter the Smith commission and the process that follows in good faith.

I echo the hon. Lady's comments about her right hon. Friends the Members for Edinburgh South West (Mr Darling) and for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Mr Brown). All Members from Scotland, and a number from beyond it, played their role in giving leadership across the referendum campaign, but her two right hon. Friends indeed played a particularly important and significant role.

The motion on the Order Paper honouring the timetable has indeed been tabled. On the approach of the Labour party and the Government, I should remind the House that under the Scotland Act 2012 any proposal should have cross-party support, should be based on evidence and should not be to the detriment of other parts of the UK. It is the Government's view, as expressed in the Command Paper today, that that should also be the guiding principle in relation to the current process.

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**Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con):** Does the Secretary of State accept that throughout the House many believe that further devolution to Scotland can occur only if there is a rebalancing of the entire constitutional settlement, with English votes on English issues? Does he agree that those who say that that would create two classes of MP are being disingenuous? The House has had an imbalance since devolution; many Members have been able to vote on issues such as health and education in England without having to answer to a single voter for those decisions.

**Mr Carmichael:** I have said many times that the completion of the job of devolution in Scotland and the process we are now undertaking would unlock the door to further constitutional change across the whole of the United Kingdom, and I believe that to be the case. Let me be clear, however, that the timetable we

have set out here will be honoured. If other parts of the United Kingdom are able to take advantage and to move along in our slipstream, so to speak, that will be to their advantage, but we will not delay the implementation of the proposals in Scotland for other parts of the UK.

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow Central) (Lab):** Scotland has decided and spoken, and it is now the accepted sovereign will of the Scottish people to work in partnership with the rest of the United Kingdom and support it through devolution. One of the lessons from the referendum campaign, though, is that although our country may not be broken, people believe that our political, social and economic model is broken and does not work for ordinary people. That is why I urge the Secretary of State and, indeed, the entire Government not to fall into the trap of thinking that we can just talk about which politician has what power in what building; more important is what politicians choose to do with the powers they have to make a genuine difference to people's lives. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the process being talked about is separate from the process being mentioned by others—that of English votes for English laws?

**Mr Carmichael:** On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, I think I have already made that clear. I very much hope that once we have done this piece of work, we will in Scotland at last be able to move on to using the powers of the Parliament rather than just talking about them.

**Sir Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) (LD)** *rose—*

**Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD)** *rose—*

**Mr Speaker:** Ah! Two distinguished Liberal Democrat knights in heated competition—what a delicious choice! I call Sir Menzies Campbell.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** Does my right hon. Friend understand the general welcome there has been in Scotland for the fact that change in Scotland should not be held up to enable England to catch up? Having agreed that position, is it not right for the Government, and indeed for him today, to say that, although not in lockstep, there will undoubtedly be progress on constitutional change for the other nations that form the United Kingdom? Particularly with regard to any possible change in the role of Scottish MPs, does he agree that however

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superficially attractive it might appear, changes to the Standing Orders would be inappropriate, and that such a change to the role of Scottish MPs should undoubtedly be enshrined in primary legislation?

**Mr Carmichael:** My right hon. and learned Friend is entirely correct about that. This should be something that does more than just affect just the Standing Orders of this House. Indeed, even if it were to be done in that very narrow way, he would, I suspect, be one of the first to remind me that the House guards very jealously, through your office, Mr Speaker, its right to determine its Standing Orders for itself. It has never normally been the practice for Government to lead on these matters.

**Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab):** Does the Secretary of State agree that the Smith commission process will require compromise and good faith from all political parties in Scotland? Does he also agree that in the agreement that comes we must see the sharing of resources across the United Kingdom? Is not that in keeping with the spirit of the way in which the Scottish people voted on 18 September?

**Mr Carmichael:** I think Lord Smith has already made it clear that he is not going to deliver independence by the back door. Whatever proposals he comes up with on St Andrew's night in relation to further

devolution, they will be in the context of there continuing to be a United Kingdom, and the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom will be respected.

**Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con):** Does my right hon. Friend agree that we ought to learn some lessons from this near-death experience of the United Kingdom and the fact that we did not intend the winning margin to be as narrow as 10%? Does he also agree that if we are to avoid another referendum, Westminster politics and Westminster politicians must raise the tone of debate with our Scottish counterparts in order to ensure that we develop more of a relationship of mutual respect, with less opportunity for the nationalists to make mischief?

**Mr Carmichael:** There are indeed many lessons to be learned from this, and their full extent will probably not be apparent for some time to come. This statement is an important part of the process, because it is very important that the Government, with the official Opposition as well, are able to demonstrate to the people of Scotland that we are making good the commitment that we made in the course of the referendum campaign. Politicians doing what they say they will do in that way is probably the most important thing we can do to restore faith in politics.

**Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP):** The Secretary of State is, of course, right: the referendum was an incredible, transformational event that gripped and energised our whole nation. I am sure he will want to join me in congratulating the Scottish people on the way in which they went about that business. He is also right to say that Scotland is moving on. According to one opinion poll, two thirds of the Scottish people want devolution maximum—everything devolved, other than foreign affairs and defence. Three quarters have said that they want all taxation devolved to Scotland. This is

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the thing, isn't it? There might be a Command Paper, but the people in charge of this process are the Scottish people themselves and we will be judged by their good judgment on what they want for their future.

**Mr Carmichael:** May I say again that I welcome the participation of the hon. Gentleman's party in the Smith process? I very much hope—in fact, I believe—that that is being done in good faith. However, perhaps the hon. Gentleman should take heed of the 60.19% of the people in his own area who voted to remain part of the United Kingdom. If he tries to subvert the Smith process by getting independence through the back door, as others have said, he will pay a heavy price.

**Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Kensington) (Con):** Should we not all be grateful to the Scottish National party for having called the referendum? Has it not in fact provided an opportunity for the Scottish people in the 21st century to show that they have come to the same conclusion as their ancestors in 1707 that the best interests of all the peoples of this island are to have a British citizenship in a United Kingdom?

**Mr Carmichael:** There are, indeed, occasions when we should be grateful to the Scottish National party; they are few and far between, but this may, in the way the right hon. and learned Gentleman describes it, be one of them. It was not, of course, the Scottish National party that called the referendum; it was an agreement between Her Majesty's Government here and the Scottish Government in Edinburgh—the Edinburgh agreement—that gave the basis for it to happen. It would be helpful for the SNP leadership to now make it clear that we have met the terms of the Edinburgh agreement, that the decision was fair, legal and decisive, and that, accordingly, we will not revisit the process.

**Gregg McClymont (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (Lab):** As a Labour nominee to the Smith commission, may I welcome the Secretary of State's constructive comments? In that spirit of constructive dialogue, as we approach the debate about further devolution will he consider bringing

forward the public information campaign on the raft of tax powers that are to be transferred to the Scottish Parliament by 2016?

**Mr Carmichael:** I wish the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues well on the Smith commission; he has a job of work to do, but he is very well qualified to do it. I will give consideration to his question about our public information campaign on the powers already coming from the 2012 Act.

**Sir Hugh Robertson (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con):** The Secretary of State is to be commended for introducing the Command Paper in such a timely fashion. Has any thought been given to the lessons learned from this campaign, particularly whether a simple majority of 50% plus one is sufficient for a matter of such far-reaching constitutional implications?

**Mr Carmichael:** I have thought of little else in the past few weeks. I know that when referendum processes are undertaken in other parts of the world a debate

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often takes places on the point raised by the right hon. Gentleman. My view continues to be that 50% plus one should be the threshold for any referendum in a democracy.

**Mr John Denham (Southampton, Itchen) (Lab):** It is clear that Scotland will now get what Scotland wants, and so England must get what England wants. The Secretary of State has outlined a process through which the debate about Scotland's future reached every corner of Scottish society. Does he agree that, in determining our future, England must have that same opportunity and that to push changes through a narrow Cabinet Committee on an artificially short time scale would be absolutely unacceptable?

**Mr Carmichael:** In relation to the work of the Cabinet Committee, there is not of course a time scale, except that we are looking towards the next general election in May 2015. I would say to the right hon. Gentleman that we are perhaps more familiar with the process in Scotland than in the rest of the United Kingdom. We have been round this course at least twice: first with the constitutional convention, and then with the Calman commission in 2008. On each occasion, we brought together political parties and the voices of business, trade unions, churches, local authorities and others to build consensus, and then we implemented it. That is the way that people are best guaranteed to get the constitutional change they want.

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):** The Secretary of State knows that, with the advent of devolution under the previous Labour Government, the number of seats for Scotland in this House was reduced from 72 to 59. With further devolution, will he support a reduction in the number of seats for Scotland in this House?

**Mr Carmichael:** No.

**Tom Greatrex (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op):** Further to that question, I note that the Secretary of State has made it clear that implications for other parts of the United Kingdom will follow from this process, and some of those points are set out in the Command Paper. Will he clarify that? On page 43 of the Command Paper, it states that the Liberal Democrat commission's view is that

“the present level of Scottish representation at Westminster should be retained until a federal structure for the UK has been delivered”.

Does that remain his position and that of his Front-Bench colleagues?

**Mr Carmichael:** That remains the position of my party.



**Sir Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) (LD):** May I first welcome my right hon. Friend's Command Paper? As somebody who led our party in the constitutional convention, I welcome the fact that the Scottish Parliament will now get proper tax-raising powers. Does he agree that anything more than 50% looks a lot like home rule and a shared partnership? To those who want devolution within England, may I say, "You have our support, but it is quite difficult to support something that is unclear"? We need a constitutional convention. I suggest that devolution has

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in every case been accompanied by electoral reform and proportionality, and that should also be a condition in England.

**Mr Carmichael:** It is an important point that devolution has in every case been accompanied by electoral reform, and that institutions to which power is devolved are always elected proportionately. I cannot add a great deal to my answer to the right hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr Denham) on the need to build consensus in whichever way people in England choose. In Scotland, we have done it in a way that has worked for us twice, and will I believe now work for us a third time. It could work for people in England, but it is for them to make up their own minds about that.

**Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP):** I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. I welcome more the resounding result of our Scottish kith and kin choosing to stay within the Union, and I welcome the way in which the debate was fought and won. The implications go well beyond the Scottish highlands and islands or the borders: where Scotland goes with devolution, Northern Ireland invariably follows. What engagement will the Smith commission and Lord Smith have with parties in Northern Ireland to ensure that the outcome reflects the needs of all the United Kingdom in all its diversity, especially the needs of Northern Ireland?

**Mr Carmichael:** Lord Smith has been charged with building a consensus in relation to further powers for the Scottish Parliament. I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman has a view informed by his experience of devolution in Northern Ireland, Lord Smith will certainly be interested to hear it. Given the remit that we have given Lord Smith, however, I do not expect him to say anything in relation to changes for Northern Ireland.

**Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con):** Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the business community on both sides of the border will be fully consulted on the further devolution of powers over personal taxation, because they shoulder much of the administrative burden? Much as further devolution might be desirable, it must not increase the regulatory burden on wealth and job creators on both sides of the border.

**Mr Carmichael:** Indeed, the voice of business is very important in this process, as it was throughout the referendum campaign. I know from my discussions with the CBI, the chambers of commerce and others that they are working on their proposals. I urge all collective organisations, individual businesses and individual citizens who have something to say to come forward and say it—this is their time.

**Graeme Morrice (Livingston) (Lab):** Will the Secretary of State confirm that the decisive no vote was not a vote for the status quo, but a vote for continued change, and that we in this House must deliver and be seen to deliver on our commitments to further Scottish devolution quickly, inclusively and decisively, without tying them to any decentralisation plans for south of the border?

**Mr Carmichael:** I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance, which I have already given on two or three occasions this afternoon. There are few things

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that would be worse for the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom than our not delivering on the promises that we made or not meeting the timetable. It is because I care so much about keeping the United Kingdom together that I am determined that we will meet the timetable that we have laid out.

**Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con):** Today's Command Paper does not contain a section dedicated to the supervening question of the position of European law in relation to Scotland. That is a reserved matter under the Scotland Act 1998. Will the Secretary of State give an absolute and categorical assurance that, having saved the Union of the United Kingdom, under no circumstances will we surrender the Scottish functions to the European Union?

**Mr Carmichael:** I would be more than happy for the hon. Gentleman to engage directly with Lord Smith. Indeed, I will make every effort to explain to Lord Smith what he might expect.

**Mr Brian H. Donohoe (Central Ayrshire) (Lab):** In his statement, the Secretary of State said:

“It is important that everyone now accepts this result”.

The \$64,000 question is how long it will be before the SNP demands another referendum.

**Mr Carmichael:** Demands for a further referendum would have an exceptionally damaging effect on Scottish businesses, Scottish jobs and the Scottish economy. We know that because we can see what happened in Quebec in Canada when the separatists did not accept the outcome and came back a second time. We know what happened to the financial services sector in Montreal. I do not want that to happen in Scotland. Unfortunately, I cannot dictate what the Scottish National party will do, but I say to it that if it does not make it clear that it accepts this result and if it does not engage in the Smith commission in good faith, it will suffer.

**Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con):** As my right hon. Friend congratulates the people of Scotland on the 85% turnout in the referendum, I hope that he will reflect on the 85% of people in the United Kingdom who did not get a vote on the Union: namely, the people of England. He has no mandate from me or my constituents to devolve further powers to Scotland, while expecting my constituents to bankroll it and failing to address the issue of English votes for English laws.

**Mr Carmichael:** I fear that my hon. Friend does not quite reflect the intricacies of the settlement in the United Kingdom. I invite him to reflect on that at some leisure. I understand completely the concerns that he expresses about the position of England within the United Kingdom. Of course that discussion needs to take place. We have had such a discussion for decades in Scotland and I wish the people of England well in having it, but I cannot emphasise too strongly that that discussion cannot and will not hold up the delivery of the powers to the Scottish Parliament.

**Cathy Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab/Co-op):** A key principle during the referendum debate was the delivery of fairness in Scotland. I was pleased to

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hear the Secretary of State confirm that the principle of pooling and sharing resources across the United Kingdom will be fundamental. Will he say more about whether Lord Smith will have access to various resources within the Treasury and the Government so that he can produce further analysis of the various proposals that have been put forward by the different political parties, with the principle of the pooling and sharing of resources in mind?

**Mr Carmichael:** The secretariat for Lord Smith's commission is already supported by civil servants from the Scotland Office, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. I met Lord Smith on the Monday following the referendum and I told him then—I am happy to repeat this commitment publicly—that any resources that he felt he needed would be given, such is the importance that we attach to the work with which he has been tasked.

**Sir James Paice (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con):** Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the holes in the current devolution settlement, as some of us pointed out at the time, is that effectively the Scottish people have representation without taxation? We must ensure that the Scottish Government have not only the power but the obligation to raise some of their taxes, thus increasing their accountability and enhancing democracy.

**Mr Carmichael:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. The completion of the job of devolution requires the Scottish Parliament to be given control of at least half its budget—preferably more in my view, although we will see what Lord Smith comes forward with on that in the fullness of time. It is important for the rebalancing of the political debate in Scotland that we have a Parliament that debates not only how to spend money, but how to raise it.

**Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab):** Does the Secretary of State agree that the high level of participation among ordinary members of the public in the referendum debate was incredibly important, and a stark contrast to the debate leading up to the Scotland Act 2012, which of course delivered substantial further powers to the Scottish Parliament on the taxation and indeed borrowing that come to it? Does he agree that we must listen to the message of that debate, which was that whether people voted yes or no, they wanted change and we have failed to deliver on social justice? Will he hold a public education campaign and ensure that the Government talk not only about the powers that need to be delivered, but about how those powers can be used by the Scottish Parliament to deliver social justice?

**Mr Carmichael:** Having a short process such as the one we have outlined allows early delivery of those powers, and that will allow us to get on to talking about how we use those powers, not just where they are. I share the hon. Lady's commitment to progress and social justice, and one thing that is clear from 18 September is that people in Scotland, and elsewhere, understand that these are often complex and subtle problems that we cannot solve just by drawing a line on the map.

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**David Mowat (Warrington South) (Con):** Does the Secretary of State agree that part of this settlement needs to be a public spending agreement that is fair to all four nations of the UK? On that basis, will he be reviewing the Barnett formula to ensure that it continues to reflect relative need and will do so in the future?

**Mr Carmichael:** Part of the vow made by the three party leaders was that there would be no change to the Barnett formula, and that remains Government policy.

**Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC):** With the Wales Bill about to proceed to the other place, what improvements will the UK Government bring to the Bill to reflect the changing constitutional landscape following events in Scotland?

**Mr Carmichael:** I am afraid that the answer to that question will have to be delivered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

**Mike Crockart (Edinburgh West) (LD):** I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement, and may I echo his call for all of Scotland, whether part of the 45%, 55%, or indeed 65% of my constituents in Edinburgh

West who voted no, to now set aside our differences and party affiliations and ensure that the will of the Scottish people is delivered?

**Mr Carmichael:** I echo that sentiment, and having campaigned on a number of occasions with my hon. Friend in his constituency during the referendum campaign, I was not in any way surprised that his constituents voted by such a handsome margin; it was almost as good as the decision in Orkney — *[Interruption.]* Shetland also voted no very heavily. The best way to capitalise on that magnificent result is for us in this House to demonstrate good faith in relation to the vow.

**Jim McGovern (Dundee West) (Lab):** I am mindful of the previous hon. Member's contribution. At the risk of sounding partisan, we see the separatists' turnout here today. Are they really the party that stands up for Scotland? They cannot even turn up for Scotland.

**Mr Carmichael:** I am sure there are good reasons why hon. Members are here or not, and they can explain that for themselves.

**Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con):** The Secretary of State is absolutely right that the vow must be made good on, but the devolution of considerable additional powers to Scotland has a particular impact on the north of England and we need a long-term solution to our constitution. One thing that could very quickly enhance the voice of the north is to deliver English votes for English laws. Can the Secretary of State confirm that there is absolutely nothing to prevent that happening in tandem with the new powers for Scotland?

**Mr Carmichael:** To make any change of that sort, it will be necessary for the parties to build consensus and to deliver it through this House. That is something that goes beyond my responsibility.

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**Mrs Anne McGuire (Stirling) (Lab):** Given the enthusiasm of the Scottish electorate during the referendum campaign, how will the Secretary of State maintain the enthusiasm, engagement and transparency of the process, so that on 30 November it does not look as though we have delivered a fix, instead of something that has support among the Scottish people?

**Mr Carmichael:** I will be more than happy to play my role in the process that the right hon. Lady outlines. There is a duty and an opportunity for all of us, across all the parties, to play a role. The electorate has rebooted politics in Scotland. It is for us now to respond to the initiative that has been taken by the people.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** I am told that on all sorts of measures Kettering is the most average borough in England. I would contend that Kettering people are the most fair-minded people in England. I am sure that my constituents would be very happy for Scotland to have lots more powers so that it can decide things for itself. However, what the fair-minded people of Kettering cannot accept—I would like the Secretary of State to try to explain it to them—is the Scottish people receiving premiums for public services, over and above what the average English taxpayer gets in England, unrelated to relative deprivation.

**Mr Carmichael:** The flow of money between the different parts of the United Kingdom comes and goes at different times over the years. What we have—Scotland has just said that it wishes to continue to be part of this—is a situation in which we all share and pool risks and resources. That is what the people of

Scotland have voted for. I hope the hon. Gentleman will sign up to that too.

**Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab):** In relation to greater devolution, one proposal that my party made was for the devolution of housing benefit. I appreciate that to some extent that cuts across one of the current Government's pet projects, universal credit, but will the Secretary of State assure me that his colleagues on the Government Front Bench will be as flexible as possible and willing to see changes that will really help people in Scotland. Incidentally, this proposal might get his Government off one of their uncomfortable hooks—a policy that is not even going to work.

**Mr Carmichael:** Time will tell exactly what the change to universal credit achieves. On the devolution of housing benefit and other matters, we will wait and see what Lord Smith comes forward with. It is not appropriate at this stage for me, as a Minister, to second-guess what he might come up with, but the Government will respond in good faith when we see his heads of agreement.

**Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con):** The Secretary of State will be aware that very late in the campaign all three party leaders promised significant extra powers to the people of Scotland. What calculations were done on the costs of implementing any additional powers? I heard the Secretary of State say that all resources would be given in terms of making up the deal, but when will the House see any figures associated with what will happen in the name of giving extra powers to Scotland?

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**Mr Carmichael:** May I gently correct my hon. Friend on one point? The proposals of the three parties that support the continuation of the United Kingdom were published, in some cases, 18 months ahead of the independence referendum, and all certainly were published well before the summer. What was made clear in the latter stages of the referendum campaign was the timetable that would be followed. That was the essence of the new commitment that was made. On the figures that will be available, I am afraid that my hon. Friend will, like the rest of us, have to wait until Lord Smith comes forward with his heads of agreement on 30 November, because we cannot put figures on something that we do not yet know the details of.

**Sandra Osborne (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Lab):** These powers are, of course, extremely important, but may I join colleagues on the Opposition Benches in emphasising the need for further devolution to deliver on social justice and equality? That is what the Scottish people voted for, and it is what they want to hear. We are very proud of our young people and the way they conducted themselves and engaged with the campaign, but does the Secretary of State agree that it is illogical to give them a vote for just one election?

**Mr Carmichael:** I certainly join the hon. Lady in congratulating 16 and 17-year-olds on the enthusiasm and vigour that they brought to the campaign, which was one of the most heartening aspects of the whole process. Although this goes beyond the next general election, I think it would be difficult for any future Government to resist such a change across the whole of the United Kingdom, and, having seen its effect in Scotland, I do not see why anybody would want to.

**Michael Connarty (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab):** I commend the Secretary of State for being able to take the heat out of a situation better than almost anyone else in politics. He has taken some heat himself during the campaign. Will he assure me that the people who do not shout the loudest—people who do not gang up on others—will be heard by the Smith commission? I am talking about the quiet people—the 10,000 contacts I had from constituents who said they wanted this to be solved, whether they voted yes or no, and who wanted their group, whether it was a non-governmental organisation or a charity, to be heard by whoever designs the future of Scotland within the Union.

**Mr Carmichael:** The hon. Gentleman commends me on taking the heat out of the situation. I wonder if that is perhaps an oblique way of saying I am boring if that is what is necessary. I have certainly been accused of an awful lot worse than that during my 13 years as a Member of this House.

In terms of engaging the quiet majority who spoke, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: it should not just be the squeaky wheel that gets the grease. Anybody who has a view on how Scotland can be better governed should be able to express that view and expect it to be given the respect it will undoubtedly deserve.

**Gemma Doyle (West Dunbartonshire) (Lab/Co-op):** The people of Scotland have made a positive choice to stay in the UK. There is clearly support for the further devolution proposed by the three parties, and that must

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now happen and that process must move forward. I understand that there need to be discussions about devolution to other parts of the UK, but will the Secretary of State urge calm among his colleagues? It will be ludicrous if the result of this vote is that we start to rip apart this Parliament because of their ill-thought-out and rushed proposals.

**Mr Carmichael:** I cannot restate too often the importance of building the broadest possible consensus. It has taken us decades to do that in Scotland, and the Smith commission is just the latest iteration. I believe that parties in England, Wales and Northern Ireland now have to enter into that process with the same good faith we are showing in Scotland. There is no alternative to building that sort of consensus. Reflecting on some of the efforts of this Government, I see no other way of achieving constitutional reform than by building that consensus.

**Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab):** I wish the Secretary of State well in completing the process of devolution to Scotland, but it cannot be denied that that will leave unfinished business in the form of devolution in England to our great cities outside London such as Birmingham. In his capacity as a Cabinet member of the United Kingdom Government, is he talking to his colleagues—particularly the Minister responsible for cities—about how the greater devolution of power to cities in England can take place in tandem with the work that he is doing in Scotland?

**Mr Carmichael:** I reiterate that I hesitate to use terms such as “in tandem” because they might suggest a link that could cause delay for one process or the other. It is apparent to me that there is an increased appetite for discussing constitutional change, especially in England. I see that among my own family living in England. I think that it is entirely healthy, and I will encourage it in any way I can. The hon. Lady mentioned devolution to cities. I believe that this Government’s record on city deals and on giving opportunities and resources to cities represents one of our biggest successes. It has probably brought more significant change to the way in which England is governed than many people realise.

**Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab):** I strongly support more powers for the Scottish Parliament, but as the Secretary of State has said, there is a growing appetite for more devolution throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, perhaps in different forms. Will he therefore support the sensible suggestion that the way forward might well be to have a constitutional convention?

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**Mr Carmichael:** I have already made it clear that I am something of an enthusiast for that process, having been through it north of the border. I have always thought that there were applicable lessons for the rest of the United Kingdom, but I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that I do not see us resolving that issue this side

of the general election.

**Mr Iain McKenzie (Inverclyde) (Lab):** I do not think that it is lost on the Secretary of State, or on any of the hon. Members in this House who took part in the referendum campaign, that there are now deep divisions among the Scottish people. Does he agree that, if those divisions are to be healed to allow people to come together, a good starting point would be for the leadership of the Scottish National party to acknowledge that the question of Scottish independence is now dead for decades?

**Mr Carmichael:** I have already made it clear that I expect the leadership of the Scottish National party—in whatever shape or form it eventually emerges—to give that commitment to the Scottish people. That was what the party signed up to in the Edinburgh agreement and that was what it was saying in the week before the referendum. I see no reason why it should not stick to that position.

**Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab):** I am absolutely certain that the events in Scotland will lead to further devolution in Wales and in England, but what analysis has the Secretary of State made of the proposals on English votes for English laws? Would it not be bizarre if Scottish MPs were barred from voting but Scottish peers were allowed to vote on exactly the same legislation? Such peers could include the ninth Earl of Arran, the 14th Earl of Stair, the 16th Earl of Lindsay and, for that matter, Lord Smith.

**Mr Carmichael:** Lord Smith is not an hereditary peer. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Laws) has already said, where we have devolved, we have devolved to a legislature, be it a Parliament or an Assembly, that is elected proportionally. That has been an important part of the way in which we have gone about the process of devolution, and I think that the people of England should be entitled to that as well. The essential difficulty that the hon. Gentleman touches on is that it is —*[Interruption.]* He knows my views on an unelected House of Lords. It is very difficult to devolve within Parliament but not the Executive, and that is something that those who want changes of this sort will have to address and explain.

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### **Backbench Business**

### **Palestine and Israel**

**Mr Speaker:** A manuscript amendment standing in the name of the right hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw) and others has been tabled this morning—copies are available in the Vote Office—and I have selected it. In a moment, I shall call Mr Grahame M. Morris to move the motion. It might be for the convenience of the House for Members to be told that no fewer than 52 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, in consequence of which I am sorry to have to say that there will need to be a five-minute limit on Back-Bench contributions. I understand that at some point, probably around the middle of the debate, the Minister and the shadow Minister wish to contribute. They are not, of course, so constrained, but I am sure that they will want sensitively to tailor their speeches, taking account of the level of interest of their Back-Bench colleagues. Similarly, the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) is not subject to the five-minute limit, but I know that he will aspire to retain or to gain the warm regard of his colleagues and will therefore not seek to detain the House beyond 15 minutes, and preferably not beyond 10.

**Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** If the hon. Gentleman must.

**Crispin Blunt:** It is pertinent to the issue of amendments. An amendment standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) has been tabled, and I have been given two accounts as to whether it has been withdrawn or not selected. I would be grateful if you could illuminate the House, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very happy to illuminate the House. That amendment has not been selected; the amendment selected is that in the name of the right hon. Member for Blackburn. I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising the point.

5.46 pm

**Grahame M. Morris (Easington) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House believes that the Government should recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel.

I wish to place on record my thanks to the Backbench Business Committee for allocating time in the main Chamber for what is obviously, given the number of Members from all parts of the House who have indicated support, a very popular and timely debate. May I say at the outset that I am happy to support the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw) and various other Members? It has always been my position that recognition of Palestinian statehood should form the basis of any future peace negotiations, and the amendment clarifies that.

**Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

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**Grahame M. Morris:** I will, but I suspect I will have to be careful about giving way, given the time.

**Ian Paisley:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, his party played a phenomenally important role in the peace process in Northern Ireland, one of the world's most successful peace processes. Why not learn from that experience and, instead of setting the conclusion at the beginning of the debate, wait for the debate and the negotiation to take place in order to reach the conclusion?

**Grahame M. Morris:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention but—if he will bear with me—I hope to be able to destroy that argument comprehensively.

I am firmly of the opinion that the day will come when the two-state solution, which I believe is supported by all parties on both sides of the House, will collapse and Israel will face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights. As soon as that happens, the state of Israel is finished. Hon. Members might think that that is controversial, but they are not really my words but those of the then Israeli Prime Minister in 2007.

The two-state solution has been Britain's stated policy aim for decades, but in politics talk often comes cheap. I have participated in numerous debates in Westminster Hall and in the main Chamber where I have heard speeches delivered by Back Benchers from both sides of the House and from Ministers at the Dispatch Box stating our commitment to a two-state solution—

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):** May I say that many people support the two-state solution? Will he also confirm that more than 300 Israeli figures signed a letter on Sunday urging this Parliament to vote in favour of the motion, and they included former Ministers, ex-diplomats and



activists in Israel?

**Grahame M. Morris:** I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for her intervention. As a friend of Palestine, I earnestly believe that recognition of the state of Palestine is the only way forward, and that it should be the choice of all true friends of Israel. All parties should come together on that basis. Given our commitment to a two-state solution and the fact that an overwhelming majority of 134 nations voted in favour of Palestinian statehood, I was hugely disappointed by our decision to abstain on the issue at the UN General Assembly. We should regret that decision.

**Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab):** There were no boundaries when the state of Israel was created, so there should be no prerequisite for the recognition of a Palestinian state.

**Grahame M. Morris:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should like to make some progress, so that all Members who have expressed a wish to speak have the opportunity to make their own specific points.

The decision that was taken at the UN General Assembly placed Britain not only at odds with the international consensus, but on the wrong side of history. Although this is a cross-party debate—I want to pay tribute to all colleagues from all parts of the House who have supported the motion—I have to say that, as a Labour MP, I was proud when my party opposed the Government's decision and said that the British Government should be willing

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to support the recognition of Palestinian statehood. I am proud, too, that Labour is supporting today's call to recognise Palestine.

**Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) rose—**

**Grahame M. Morris:** I will give way just one more time.

**Caroline Lucas:** The hon. Gentleman is very kind to give way, and I congratulate him on securing this debate. Does he agree that this is an unprecedented moment? Sweden has already moved to recognise Palestine. If we do not grasp this moment, we will lose a real opportunity to push this matter forward and to move closer to peace.

**Grahame M. Morris:** I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady. As the originator of the Balfour declaration and holder of the mandate for Palestine, Britain has a unique historical connection and, arguably, a moral responsibility to the people of both Israel and Palestine. In 1920, we undertook a sacred trust—a commitment to guide Palestinians to statehood and independence. That was nearly a century ago, and the Palestinian people are still to have their national rights recognised. This sacred trust has been neglected for far too long. As the hon. Lady has just said, we have an historic opportunity to atone for that neglect, and take this small but symbolically important step.

**Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Grahame M. Morris:** I would rather not. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have an opportunity to speak later. I wish to make some progress.

The former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the current Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), who is not in his place, told the House that the two-state solution might become impossible if a settlement were not reached within a year. That was in 2012—two years ago. I am pleased to see that the Minister is listening attentively, as I expect him

to stand at the Dispatch Box and tell us that we support a two-state solution and that we encourage all parties to return to negotiations. I advise him to keep hold of his speech, because he will soon have another opportunity to use it given the failure of so many similar initiatives.

It is now more than 20 years since the Oslo accords, and we are further away from peace than ever before. An entire generation of young Palestinians—the Oslo generation—has grown up to witness a worsening situation on the ground. We have seen a significant expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, heightened security threats to both sides, punitive restrictions on Palestinian movement, economic decline, a humanitarian crisis in Gaza of catastrophic proportions and the construction of an illegal annexation wall through Palestinian land.

It is clear that both Israel-Palestine relations and our foreign policy are at an impasse, which must be broken. We hear a great deal of talk about the two-state solution. Today, through validating both states, Members will have the opportunity to translate all that principled talk into action, but we should be under no illusions—today

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might be a symbolically important step, but it will not change the facts on the ground. The continuous blockade of the Gaza strip will not relent and the day-to-day reality of life under occupation will not change for the ordinary Palestinians. Opponents of the motion will use the well-worn argument that statehood should come through negotiations and not unilateral action.

Let us make no mistake about this: to make our recognition of Palestine dependent on Israel's agreement would be to grant Israel a veto over Palestinian self-determination.

**Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

**Grahame M. Morris:** Let me finish this point, and then I will give way for the last time. We have had a huge debate on giving up sovereignty to the EU. British people may or may not disagree with that argument, but they and their representatives here in this House would feel that it was completely wrong in practice and in principle if another sovereign state, be it Israel or any other country, determined our foreign policy.

**Mr Djanogly:** Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan involved bilateral negotiations and agreement on both sides. Why does the hon. Gentleman think that it would work now unilaterally?

**Grahame M. Morris:** The evidence of history is why. Twenty years of negotiations have failed, so we need to move things on. I firmly believe that we can all rally around this effort, and that that would achieve the desired results.

**Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con)** *rose—*

**Grahame M. Morris:** No, I am afraid I will not give way.

Recognition is not an Israeli bargaining chip; it is a Palestinian right. It is one that has to form the basis of any serious negotiations. Indeed, the lack of equity between Israel and the Palestinians is a structural failure that has undermined the possibility of a political settlement for decades. As it stands, Israel has little motivation or encouragement—perhaps little incentive is a better way of putting it—to enter into meaningful negotiations. The majority of Israeli Government politicians flat-out reject the notion of a Palestinian state. There are currently no negotiations and, as Secretary of State John Kerry admitted, it was Israeli intransigence that caused the collapse of the latest round of talks.

Israel has been unwilling to offer a viable Palestinian state through negotiations. If the acceleration of the illegal settlement enterprise had not already proved that, in July Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu once again ruled out ever accepting a sovereign Palestinian state in the west bank.

**Andrew Percy:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

**Grahame M. Morris:** No, I will not give way.

Let me be clear: to make recognition dependent on negotiations, as some Members advocate, is to reject the two-state solution. Some argue that by recognising Palestine,

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we would undermine negotiations or somehow incite violence, but it is the systematic denial of rights that incites violence and emboldens those who reject politics. The knowledge that Britain, once again, is refusing to recognise the rights of the Palestinian people will serve only to validate those who reject diplomacy and to demonstrate the futility of the efforts of moderates on both sides.

Rejectionists in both Israel and Palestine—those who oppose any type of political settlement—will be delighted to learn that the British Parliament has refused what the vast majority of states have already accepted. Members should bear that in mind before they cast their vote. Those Palestinians who have pursued the path of diplomacy and non-violence for more than 20 years have achieved very little. We need to send them a message and give them encouragement that it is the path of peace and co-operation, and not the resorting to force of arms, that will actually lead to a lasting and just peace. It will also send a message to Israel that the British Parliament believes that its illegal settlement enterprise, which has pushed the possibility of a two-state settlement to the brink of collapse, has no validity whatsoever and that the international community is resolute in its opposition to the systematic colonisation of Palestinian land.

The right to statehood has already been accepted by the Government, who have said that they reserve

“the right to recognise a Palestinian state bilaterally at the moment of our choosing and when it can best help bring about peace”.

If they do not do so urgently, I contend, and many informed commentators would agree with me, that any hope of a two-state solution, the only viable solution, will disappear altogether. Instead, Israel will continue its crusade towards the morally repugnant and politically untenable one-state solution that, in truth, could be maintained only through even greater brutality and effectively through apartheid rule—a fate so bleak that any true friend of Israel would oppose it.

In conclusion, during the assault on Gaza the leaders of all the main political parties told Members in this House that the life of a Palestinian child is worth just as much as the life of an Israeli child. Today, we can show that we regard both peoples as equal in dignity and rights not just in death but in life. I urge Members to support the motion and to recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel.

6.1 pm

**Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Kensington) (Con):** I listened with great care to the sensitive speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris), and I compliment him on his balanced remarks. I find this a very difficult issue to address, and I do not think the answer to the question that the House is having to consider is absolutely on one side or the other.

It fell to me when I was Foreign Secretary to commit the United Kingdom Government for the first time to a two-state solution with a Palestinian state. I have never wavered in that view and I believe that the earlier that state comes about the better, both for the Palestinians and for the middle east as a whole. I also share the frustration of the hon. Gentleman and that of many other hon. Members about the impasse, which has causes on both sides of the dispute. I believe that the Israelis are totally unjustified in their settlement policy. But I must also

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say that the way in which the Israelis, having withdrawn from Gaza, have been subject to an ongoing attack by Hamas from within Gaza has clearly had a massive influence on Israeli public opinion. That has made it more difficult to make the progress we would like.

For me, the most important question is what practical benefit agreeing this motion would have. It might make us feel good and it might make us act in a similar way to a number of other countries around the world, but recognising a state should happen only when the territory in question has the basic requirements for a state. Through no fault of the Palestinians, that is not true at the moment.

It seems to me that the motion is premature. I say so for the following reason. We do not have a Palestinian Government; there are actually two Governments. Palestine is split, not because of the Israelis but because of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah. Not only are the boundaries of the Palestinian state not known but there is no Palestinian Government with any control over foreign policy or defence policy or who have an army with which to protect the territory of that state. That is not a criticism; it is simply a factual description of what would normally be a precondition. The United Kingdom did not recognise the state of Israel until 1950. It was only after what the Israelis call their war of independence that the Israelis demonstrated that they had created a state not simply through a declaration but through having the fundamental requirements.

We know that there have been occasions elsewhere in the world when states have been declared without the means to carry out the function of a state. We have seen it in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where the Russians recognise an independence that is bogus in reality. We saw it in South Africa, where Transkei and Bophuthatswana were declared independent states when, of course, they were never any such thing.

**Mr Jack Straw (Blackburn) (Lab):** On the issue of the boundaries of a state of Palestine, surely their basis — although not their detail — is very clear and is internationally agreed to be the 1967 boundaries?

**Sir Malcolm Rifkind:** I will not take issue with the right hon. Gentleman on that, but I think that the boundaries are perhaps the least of the problems that we are addressing. I am saying something that has applied to British policy for generations, as it has to the policies of other countries. We recognise a state when the territory in question has a Government, an army, military capability — *[Interruption.]* That might not be something of which hon. Gentlemen would approve —

**Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con):** Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

**Sir Malcolm Rifkind:** I am sorry, but I do not have time.

Hon. Members might not approve of that policy, but it has been pursued for many years.

**Mr Andrew Love (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op):** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Sir Malcolm Rifkind:** No, I am sorry. I am afraid I cannot in the time available.

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We are told that 135 members of the United Nations—many of which have relatively little connection with the middle east, although some have a great connection—have recognised Palestine as a state. That has had no effect. It has received 24 hours of publicity but has had no marginal, massive or significant impact on the course of history. There is a great risk that today we will make ourselves feel important and that our own frustration will lead us to vote for a motion that will not have the desired effect and will perhaps make the problems that need to be addressed in reaching a two-state solution more difficult to deal with.

I will not detain the House any further, but will simply say that symbolism sometimes has a purpose and sometimes has a role, but one does not recognise a state that does not yet have the fundamental ingredients that a state requires if it is to carry out its international functions. At the very least, I would respectfully suggest that the motion is premature.

6.6 pm

**Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab):** There is so much to say about the tragedy with which Israelis and Palestinians have lived for so long. Over the years, I have spoken about the things I have seen for myself, whether that has been settlements growing in violation of international law and successive resolutions; the barrier that snakes in and out of the west bank, cutting Palestinian communities off from each other and farmers from the land; or Palestinian children being brought in leg irons into Israeli military courts, accused of throwing stones, and being subject to laws that vary depending on whether one is Palestinian or Israeli. I have sat with Palestinian families in East Jerusalem who have had their homes destroyed and who are no longer allowed to live in the city of their birth. I have seen for myself the devastation of homes, schools and hospitals in Gaza. I have met fishermen who are fired on if all they do is try to fish. Yes, I have been to Sderot as well and know that Israelis have spoken about their real fear about rocket attacks from Gaza. I also know the fear that Palestinians in Gaza feel daily because of the constant buzz of drones overhead, 24 hours a day, that could bring death at any moment.

I have not merely read about such things; I have seen them for myself. They are why a negotiated settlement is so important. Principles are important too, however, in reaching that negotiated settlement. First, we should act according to international law and insist that the parties involved do so as well. Secondly, we should treat Palestinians and Israelis as equals. We have a choice today: will we do that, or will we just talk about it?

For Israelis, the right of recognition and to self-determination are not the subject of negotiation but something they have demanded as a right and that they were given as a right more than 65 years ago.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):** I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and compliment him on all his work. Is he aware that despite what was said by the right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) and despite the fact that Israel is listed under the borders put down in 1948, it has never

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delineated its own borders? Our recognition of Palestine would help to assert Palestinian rights at this important time.

**Richard Burden:** Yes, that is absolutely right. The international position is clear: it is delineated by the green line. The final borders will be negotiated in final status negotiations. That is understood, and that is

the same for Israel and for Palestine. But let us also remember that it is more than 20 years since the Palestine Liberation Organisation, acting on behalf of the Palestinian people as a whole, recognised the state of Israel. Yet, despite that, when Israel talks about itself, it still says that it wants constant reaffirmation of that recognition. How many times have I heard Israeli Ministers—indeed, some hon. Members—ask, “How can you talk with people who do not recognise your right to exist?” So for them and Israel, recognition is not about negotiation; it is about something fundamental. Well, if that is the case for Israelis, Palestinians have no fewer rights than that. Recognition for Palestinians cannot be a matter of privilege; it, too, must be a matter of right. That is the problem with the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb), because saying that recognition can only happen with the outcome of negotiations very much gives Israel the right of veto not only over a Palestinian state but over the UK Parliament’s ability to make our own decision to recognise that Palestinian state.

**Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Richard Burden:** No. I am afraid that I have given way once. Time prevents me from doing so any more.

In the House, we make our own decisions, and we act on them bilaterally. We do so as members of the European Union and as members of the United Nations. The choice before us is clear: do we want to achieve a two-state solution in practice, with Palestinians and Israelis treated as equals, or are we content to repeat a theoretical mantra about two states where the reality is slipping away before our eyes, either because Benjamin Netanyahu, as he said to *The Times of Israel* this summer, has said that he will never countenance a Palestinian state that is sovereign in the way that he expects sovereignty for Israel, or because another generation of Palestinians has grown up being told that they must reject the path of violence when the only reality that they see ahead of them is occupation in the west bank and a blockade in Gaza.

I received an e-mail today from a Palestinian living in East Jerusalem. He described some of his life under occupation in East Jerusalem and he asked me to say this tonight: “I want to see light at the end of the tunnel, but I really want to see light at the end of the tunnel; I don’t want to see a train coming at me from the other end.” That is the challenge before us today. Are we prepared to give him that light at the end of the tunnel and to assert that a negotiated solution must be based on equality: two states for two peoples, with equal rights and each with equal stature in the international community? If we are going to do that, it is not just something to talk about; it is something to get on with. People will vote tonight for different reasons, but if we want to achieve a Palestinian state in practice, vote for the motion tonight.

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6.12 pm

**Sir Richard Ottaway (Croydon South) (Con):** If the rest of the debate follows the tone of the three speeches that we have heard so far, it will be a memorable debate. The next few minutes will be personally rather painful for me. It was inevitable right since the time of the holocaust that Israel clearly had to be a state in its own right, and Attlee accepted the inevitable and relinquished the British mandate. In November 1947, the United Nations supported the partition resolution. What was on the table then was a settlement that the Arabs would die for today. In May 1948, Israel became an independent state and came under attack from all sides within hours. In truth, it has been fighting for its existence ever since.

I was a friend of Israel long before I became a Tory. My wife’s family were instrumental in the creation of the Jewish state. Indeed, some of them were with Weizmann at the Paris conference. The holocaust had a deep impact on me as a young man growing up in the aftermath of the second world war, particularly when I paid a visit as a schoolboy to Belsen.

**Sir Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD):** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Richard Ottaway:** I will not give way if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

In the six-day war, I became personally involved. There was a major attempt to destroy Israel, and I found myself as a midshipman in the Royal Navy based on board a minesweeper in Aden, sent by Harold Wilson to sweep the straits of Tiran of mines after the Suez canal had been blocked. In the aftermath of that war, which, clearly, the Israelis won, the Arab states refused peace, recognition or negotiation.

Six years later, in the Yom Kippur war in 1973, the same situation happened again. It was an emphatic defeat after a surprise attack. Since then, based on the boundaries that were framed after the Yom Kippur war, we have had three thwarted peace agreements, each one better than the last, and we have had two tragedies: the assassination of Rabin and the stroke suffered by Ariel Sharon.

Throughout all this, I have stood by Israel through thick and thin, through the good years and the bad. I have sat down with Ministers and senior Israeli politicians and urged peaceful negotiations and a proportionate response to prevarication, and I thought that they were listening. But I realise now, in truth, looking back over the past 20 years, that Israel has been slowly drifting away from world public opinion. The annexation of the 950 acres of the west bank just a few months ago has outraged me more than anything else in my political life, mainly because it makes me look a fool, and that is something that I resent.

Turning to the substantive motion, to be a friend of Israel is not to be an enemy of Palestine. I want them to find a way through, and I am delighted by yesterday's reconstruction package for Gaza, but with a country that is fractured with internal rivalries, that shows such naked hostility to its neighbour, that attacks Israel by firing thousands of rockets indiscriminately, that risks the lives of its citizens through its strategic placing of weapons and that uses the little building material that it is allowed to bring in to build tunnels, rather than

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homes, I am not yet convinced that it is fit to be a state and should be recognised only when there is a peace agreement. Under normal circumstances, I would oppose the motion tonight; but such is my anger over Israel's behaviour in recent months that I will not oppose the motion. I have to say to the Government of Israel that if they are losing people like me, they will be losing a lot of people.

**6.16 pm**

**Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op):** I wish to draw attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

The tragic clash between Jewish and Palestinian nationalism can only be resolved with the creation of a Palestinian state with agreed and secure borders, with international backing and support, alongside the state of Israel, and the only way to bring that about in a lasting and peaceful way, to the benefit of both peoples, is through direct negotiations, where agreements are made, assurances are given and where there is full security and long-term peace. That needs agreement on borders, and some agreement has been made, but the differences are relatively small in length but critical in nature. It needs agreement on how to share Jerusalem, on refugee issues, agreement on security and agreement that setting up a Palestinian state would be the end of claims and the end of conflict, not a staging post for an attack on Israel's existence.

We should remember that the peace treaty that was signed with Egypt in 1979 has stood the test of time,

despite drastic changes in regime and Governments. In contrast, Israel's unilateral withdrawal of settlers and soldiers from Gaza in 2005 has not resulted in peace. It has led to the terrorist organisation, Hamas, violently overthrowing Fatah, launching its barrage of rockets and now directing the terror tunnels at the civilians of Israel. We saw the results in the horrendous events of last summer.

Two years ago, the Palestinian Authority were given some status in the United Nations in an attempt to look for a diplomatic UN route to try to resolve what appeared to be intractable problems. What has happened since then, and what use has been made of that diplomacy? The most recent effort to find a negotiated peace was that undertaken by John Kerry. The truth is that it was President Abbas who did not give an answer to the framework agreement that John Kerry put forward as a basis for further negotiations. Israel agreed to it, quite rightly, though it did not want to; it had to be pushed and pressurised to do so. President Abbas has still not given any answer; instead, he returned to the United Nations.

On 26 September, President Abbas addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations. That was the sort of approach that the proposed resolution envisages: no direct negotiations, and dealing with this by resolution, and through United Nations debates. He spoke about "genocide" by Israelis, and about Palestinian "martyrs". Is that the language used about the suicide bombings directed at the young people and civilians of Israel at a time when peace negotiations, following Oslo, were very much under way? He spoke about "forced withdrawals". That is not the language of peace.

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It should be remembered that while peace negotiations were under way following the Oslo negotiations, in one month alone—March 2002—80 Israeli civilians were killed and 600 injured in targeted suicide bombings on the streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Ashkelon, in a concerted attempt to undermine and destroy that peace process. No wonder there is concern among the people of Israel; they know that during those peace negotiations—it was right to stick to them and to keep going with them—terror groups sent by, among others, Yasser Arafat, were targeting, killing and maiming Israeli civilians. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza—a correct, unilateral withdrawal—was followed by rockets, the terror tunnels, and more and more death.

This is not an easy issue; if it was easy to resolve, it would have been resolved by now. Both Jews and Palestinians deserve to have their states, and to live in peace and security, side by side. Direct negotiations are the way—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order.

6.22 pm

**Sir Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton) (Con):** The House is enormously grateful to the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) for securing this debate. I hope that amendment (b), in the name of the right hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw), to which I put my name, will maximise support tonight for the recognition of Palestine as a state. I find it astonishing that, having been a Member of this House for 22 years, I cannot think of a previous occasion on which we have debated this issue on either a substantive motion, or a motion such as today's, yet this is the most vexed and emotive issue in the entire region, if not the world.

Let us be clear from the start, to allay the fears of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman), who speaks passionately on this subject: I think that all of us in this House, to a man and a woman, recognise the state of Israel and its right to exist. Our belief in that should not in any way be impugned. Let us also be clear that that same right has not been granted to Palestine; in my view, it is high time that it



was. It is the other half of the commitment that our predecessors in this House made as part of the British mandate in the region.

I cannot think of any other populous area of the world that is subject to so many resolutions but is not allowed to call itself a state. After the civil war, albeit two years after 1948, we recognised the state of Israel. It was still not the tidiest of Administrations. Its borders were not clear; they still are not. It had no agreed capital—it wanted Jerusalem; at the moment, it has Tel Aviv—and no effective Government, so I do not quite agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) in his assessment of what it takes to justify granting statehood to, and recognise, a country.

**Grahame M. Morris:** The right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) said that Palestine did not have international recognition; the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have both said that Palestinian statehood should be recognised.

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**Sir Alan Duncan:** I agree.

**Mrs Gillan** *rose*—

**Sir Alan Duncan:** Given the very short time left to me, I will race ahead, if my right hon. Friend will allow me.

We have accepted as a principle in Government that eventually there should be recognition of a Palestinian state, so this is ultimately a matter of timing and circumstance. The House will have been deeply moved by the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon South (Sir Richard Ottaway). So many of us go on a personal journey on this issue, as I have done over the past 20 years. Recognition of statehood is not a reward for anything; it is a right. The notion that it would put an end to negotiations, or somehow pre-empt or destroy them, is patently absurd; Palestine would still be occupied, and negotiations would need to continue, both to end that occupation and to agree land swaps and borders. Refusing Palestinian recognition is tantamount to giving Israel the right of veto.

When I was a Minister of State at the Department for International Development, we supported the Palestinian Authority; over so many years, it was there, a responsible organisation. It is not their fault that they are occupied, and so often have their revenues withheld by the Israelis; if they were not withheld, Palestine would not need a penny of British aid. Recognising Palestine is not about recognising a Government. It is states that are recognised, not Governments. We are talking about recognition of the right to exist as a state. This is not about endorsing a state that has to be in perfect working order. It is the principle of recognition that the House should agree to today.

**Mrs Gillan:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Sir Alan Duncan:** I will run out of time, so no; forgive me.

Some in this House clearly think that to support Israel, they must oppose or delay such recognition, but that is not the case. By opposing Palestinian recognition, they are undermining the interests of both Israel and Palestine. It is only through recognition that we can give Palestinians the dignity and hope that they need to engage in further negotiations and to live in a country that they can properly call their own. Let us remember a fundamental principle, on which I will make a more detailed speech tomorrow morning: settlements are illegal, and the endorsement of the Israelis' right to reject recognition is tantamount to the endorsement of illegal settlement activity.

A lot of people feel intimidated when it comes to standing up for this issue. It is time we did stand up for it, because almost the majority of Palestinians are not yet in their 20s. They will grow up stateless. If we do not give them hope, dignity and belief in themselves, it will be a recipe for permanent conflict, none of which is in Israel's interests. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside, who speaks on every occasion on this subject, only ever catalogues the violence on one side, and this is a tit-for-tat argument. Today, the House should do its historic duty.

6.28 pm

**Mr Jack Straw (Blackburn) (Lab):** I beg to move amendment (b), at the end of the Question to add, ‘, as a contribution to securing a negotiated two state solution.’

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I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) on bringing this debate to the House. I also pay tribute to the extraordinary and very moving speech by the right hon. Member for Croydon South (Sir Richard Ottaway), which, as I think we all appreciated, was a very difficult speech to make.

As the House will note, the amendment has wide, cross-party support. Its purpose is very simple. It is based on the belief that the recognition of the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel will add to the pressure for a negotiated two-state solution, and may help to bring that prospect a little closer to fruition.

The “Road Map to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” was promulgated at the end of April 2003 under the auspices of the Quartet—the UN, EU, US and Russia. Though, palpably, much of the progress presaged by the road map has been confounded by events, crucially, by the road map, the Government of Israel were signed up to there being a separate and independent state of Palestine. One part of the road map anticipated that Quartet members, which include the UK, could

“promote international recognition of a Palestinian state, including possible UN membership”

as a transitional measure, well before any final status agreement. The Government of Israel disagree. They claim that recognition of Palestine as a state should be at the conclusion of any successful peace negotiations. But such an approach would give the Government of Israel a veto, even over whether such a state should exist.

**Sir Alan Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (LD):** I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is trying to achieve by his amendment, but how does he think the passing of the motion would encourage either Hamas or the Israelis to change their approach to negotiation, which has been so unfruitful so far?

**Mr Straw:** It is the Palestinian Authority that is part of the negotiations, not Hamas. I believe that the fact of the Israeli's intemperate reaction to the very prospect of the House passing this resolution is proof that it will make a difference. The only thing that the Israeli Government understand, under the present demeanour of Benjamin Netanyahu, is pressure. What the House will be doing this evening will be to add to the pressure on the Government of Israel. That is why they are so worried about this resolution passing. Were it just a gesture, as the right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) implied, they would not be bothered at all. They are very worried indeed because they know that it will have an effect.

**Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con):** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his contribution, but

does he not agree that this is a Back-Bench motion? This has no effect on Government policy, and it is just futile.

**Mr Straw:** We represent the electorate of the United Kingdom. I can tell the hon. Gentleman, having spent 13 years sitting on the Treasury Bench, that resolutions passed in the House, whether they emanate from Back Benches or Front Benches, make a difference, and this resolution will, if it is passed, make a difference.

**Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con):** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

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**Mr Straw:** I have had my ration, if the hon. Gentleman will excuse me.

A moment's thought will allow us to appreciate just how ill-founded the Government of Israel's assertion is. Israel has been occupying Palestinian land for nearly 50 years. It fails to meet its clear international legal obligations as an occupying power. In the last 20 years, as we have heard, it has compounded that failure by a deliberate decision to annex Palestinian land and to build Israeli settlements on that land. There are now 600,000 such Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem and the west bank. The Israelis are seeking to strangle East Jerusalem by expropriating land all around it, and two months ago, they announced the illegal annexation of a further nearly 1,000 acres of land near Bethlehem. The Israeli Government will go on doing this as long as they pay no price for their obduracy. Their illegal occupation of land is condemned by this Government in strong terms, but no action follows. The Israelis sell produce from these illegal settlements in Palestine as if they were made or grown in Israel, but no action follows.

Israel itself was established and recognised by unilateral act. The Palestinians had no say whatever over the recognition of the state of Israel, still less a veto. I support the state of Israel. I would have supported it at the end of the 1940s. But it cannot lie in the mouth of the Israeli Government, of all Governments, to say that they should have a veto over a state of Palestine, when for absolutely certain, the Palestinians had no say whatever over the establishment of the state of Israel.

Today's debate will, I hope, send a strong signal that the British Parliament stands full square behind the two-state solution set out in the road map. The current impasse can be broken, in my view, only by actions, not simply by words, and the recognition of Palestine by the international community would further, not hinder, these aims.

Three years ago on 9 November 2011, the right hon. Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), then Foreign Secretary, told the House:

“The United Kingdom judges that the Palestinian Authority largely fulfils criteria for UN membership, including statehood”.

He added that we, the United Kingdom,

“reserve the right to recognise a Palestinian state bilaterally at a moment of our choosing and when it can best help to bring about peace.”—[*Official Report*, 9 November 2011; Vol. 535, c. 290.]

That moment is now. I urge hon. Members on both sides to support the amendment.

**6.35 pm**

**Mr James Clappison (Hertsmere) (Con):** It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for

Blackburn (Mr Straw), but I am afraid to say that, having listened carefully to his speech and the speech of the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris), I am not as convinced as I would like to be that this motion would contribute towards a peaceful solution of the conflict, or that the recognition of Palestine by the House in a Back-Bench motion would somehow unlock a process whereby the two sides negotiated freely together to arrive at a peaceful solution.

The hon. Gentleman said that he would destroy the argument of the hon. Member for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) that taking this step would pre-empt and pre-determine the result of the negotiations. I am afraid to

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say that having listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech—he did not take all interventions on this point—that argument was still well in existence at the end of his contribution and had not been destroyed at all, and it remains there for us to face. I say that as a committed supporter of a two-state solution, which will involve difficult, if not painful, compromises on both sides. It is also something that will take a long time—

**Andrew Bridgen:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, given that the political system of the world's superpower and our great ally the United States is very susceptible to well-funded powerful lobbying groups and the power of the Jewish lobby in America, it falls to this country and to this House to be the good but critical friend that Israel needs, and this motion tonight just might lift that logjam on this very troubled area?

**Mr Clappison:** There are powerful lobbies on all sides, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree with me in paying tribute to the work that Secretary of State Kerry did in trying to bring both sides to the negotiating table; he really does deserve our staunch support. But I am sure that my hon. Friend would also agree that a peaceful solution will be achieved only by negotiations by the parties themselves over all the outstanding issues, without the issues being determined in advance. The question for the outside world is whether what it does makes a just two-state solution more or less likely. I believe that international recognition of a Palestinian state in the terms of the motion would make a two-state solution less likely rather than more likely. I heard what the right hon. Member for Blackburn said about this. I am afraid that I do not see Israel, having faced the challenges that it has faced over years, caving in to this Back-Bench motion tonight. It might be a gesture on the part of the House, but it would take the process no further. The right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Easington can chose to look at this in terms of a veto, but it will require both sides, including the state of Israel, a democracy, which is susceptible to public opinion, to agree to a solution. That is the only way in which a just solution can be achieved.

**Grahame M. Morris** *rose—*

**Mr Clappison:** I will give way to the hon. Gentleman if he can answer the point, which I think was going to be made to him, as to whether he will accept that although Israel has not done everything always that it possibly could to bring about a solution, there have been repeated occasions in history, in the 1930s and the 1940s, and more recently, when it has been Israel that has agreed to a solution of all the outstanding issues, and it has not found the hand coming from the other side. That is historical fact.

**Grahame M. Morris:** What is the hon. Gentleman's solution, given that the former Foreign Secretary has said that the two-state solution is no longer tenable? Given the facts on the ground, as the right hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr Straw) and numerous other Members have indicated, with the settlement expansion plan—600,000 settlers—if we are not going to push ahead with the two-state solution because of the practicalities, what is the hon. Gentleman's alternative? Is it a one-state solution?

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**Mr Clappison:** The state of Israel has been prepared to agree to a two-state solution in the past, and I hope that it will do so in future, but that will require both sides to negotiate. I do not accept the pessimism inherent in the hon. Gentleman's approach, because it is now clear that the motion is very pessimistic. I would like to see a hopeful motion that looked forward to a peaceful solution that gave Palestine its state, based on a fair division of territory, and all the accoutrements of statehood while at the same time allowing the state of Israel to enjoy sovereignty and security.

**Sir Edward Garnier (Harborough) (Con):** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Clappison:** I am afraid that I cannot, because I would run out of time.

I believe that the Palestinian Authority have acted in good faith and are a worthy partner in negotiations. They have expressed their commitment to a two-state solution. Although he does not actually have a state, I believe that President Abbas has displayed statesmanlike qualities, not least during the recent Gazan conflict, but I believe that he and his Authority are making a mistake in going down the unilateral road.

There is a problem, which the hon. Member for Easington did not recognise, in the form of Hamas. Hamas is a different matter. Although the Palestinian Authority has acted in good faith, and although President Abbas has been statesmanlike in many ways, I am afraid that the Palestinian Authority took a backward step when they entered into a unity deal with Hamas in April this year. It would have been fine if Hamas had shown any inkling that it was moving towards a peaceful solution, but it has not. It has had many opportunities to commit to the requirements of the international community and say that it will go down the road of peace, but from its inception, and according to the tenets of its founding charter, it has set its face against any sort of peaceful co-existence with the state of Israel and turned its hand to a campaign of unremitting terror and violence. No Government would stand by and allow such a campaign to be directed against its population without taking proportionate measures in self-defence.

We must not overlook the fact—it is often overlooked—that Hamas has caused Gaza, a rather sad place to say the least, to be locked into a deeply depressing cycle of violence, intending to inflict casualties on Israel and reckless as to the consequences for the civilian population in Gaza. It is against that background that we must approach these issues.

I very much hope that in future Hamas will show some willingness to become part of a peaceful solution and to engage in normal democratic politics and peaceful and legal means, but it has not done that so far. The pressure should be on Hamas to desist its campaign of violence and enter into negotiations genuinely, together with the Palestinian Authority, with the state of Israel.

This is a terrible conflict. We must all look forward to the day when both sides get down to the business of making the compromises that will be needed to bring it to an end. Israel certainly has to make compromises as well, but in the meantime we should all take steps that will make those compromises more, rather than less, likely. My fear is that the motion—a unilateral recognition

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of the Palestinian state—by encouraging one party to walk away from negotiations, would put off that day. We should be doing everything we can to induce both sides to negotiate, because only that way, as our Government have recognised, will we see a peaceful solution to this problem.

6.43 pm

**Sir Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab):** There are 6 million Israeli Jews. There are 1,600,000 Palestinians in Israel, 2,700,000 on the west bank and 1,800,000 in Gaza. The Palestinians now outnumber the Israeli Jews, and that is without taking into account the 5 million Palestinians in refugee camps and in the diaspora. The big difference, of course, is that the Israelis have a secure state and the Palestinians live under oppression day after day.

The right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) wove a fantasy that the Jews were reunited when the state of Israel was created and that the Palestinians were split, and we have just heard again about the wickedness of Hamas—I do not condone what Hamas does, and I realise that it is a useful tool for those who wish to portray the Palestinians as divided and unreliable. His fantasy was that all was harmonious when Israel was created, but the Israelis were divided into three warring factions at that time: the Haganah, representing the official Jewish agency; the terrorist organisation Irgun Zvai Leumi; and the terrorist Stern gang. Israel nearly broke out into civil war immediately after it was founded because Irgun insisted on having its own army in an independent state. So the idea that Israel was somehow born in a moment of paradise and that all that surrounds the Palestinians is stress and damage is a fantasy.

Where are we now? The situation was not ideal for Israel then, and it is not ideal for the Palestinians now, but divided Israel survived and survives even though it is still divided. Look at the amazing divisions in the Israeli Government, with the extraordinary extremism of the Yisrael Beiteinu party, which makes the UK Independence party look like cosy internationalists, yet it is part of the Government.

The Israelis are harming the Palestinians day after day. Last week the US State Department denounced a settlement expansion of 2,600 that the Israelis are planning. Last week the new president of the New Israel Fund, Talia Sasson—Jewish and pro-Israel—denounced the expansion of settlements again in the west bank. The Israelis, with the checkpoints, the illegal wall and the settlements, are making a coherent Palestinian state impossible.

That is why it is essential to pass this motion, because it would be a game changer. The recognition of Palestine by the British House of Commons would affect the international situation. This House can create an historic new situation. I call on right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to give the Palestinians their rights and show the Israelis that they cannot suppress another people all the time. It is not Jewish for the Israelis to do that. They are harming the image of Judaism, and terrible outbreaks of anti-Semitism are taking place. I want to see an end to anti-Semitism, and I want to see a Palestinian state.

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6.48 pm

**Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) on securing the debate. I think that I am right in saying that the last time a debate of this type took place was in 1985, which was a long time ago, and that is not to the House's credit. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Croydon South (Sir Richard Ottaway) on a formidably powerful speech. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan), who also made a formidable speech.

I am convinced that recognising Palestine is both morally right and in our national interests. It is morally right because the Palestinians are entitled to a state, just as Israelis are rightly entitled to their homeland. This House should need no reminding of the terms of the Balfour declaration, which rightly endorsed

“the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”

but went on to state that

“nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”.

Ninety-seven years later, the terms of the Balfour declaration are clearly not upheld with respect to the Palestinians, and in Britain that should weigh very heavily upon us indeed. It is in our national interest to recognise Palestine as part of a drive to achieve lasting peace. We face so many dire emergencies in the middle east today; we cannot afford to add to them the continuing failure of the middle east peace process and the inevitable death of the two-state solution. This step by Britain and other nations is needed to galvanise talks that are paralysed and indicate that the status quo is not only untenable, but wholly unacceptable.

It is said that bilateral recognition would harm the prospects for negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, but the sad truth is that that effort has failed. Negotiations have completely broken down and there is not the remotest sign of a possible breakthrough. The cataclysm in Syria, the emergence of Islamic State and the 3 million Syrian refugees bringing neighbouring countries to their knees have made the situation in the middle east—already a cauldron—even more dangerous.

Moreover, as others have said, 135 of 193 UN member states have already recognised Palestine in recent years. Unless it is anyone’s serious contention that those member states are responsible for the failure of the negotiations, the act of recognition itself clearly does not wreck the prospects for peace. What does impede peace is a dismal lack of political will to make the necessary concessions and a tendency in Israel to believe that it will always be sheltered by the United States from having to take those difficult steps. Recognition by the United Kingdom would be a strong signal that the patience of the world is not without limit.

Secondly, it is said that recognition would be an empty gesture that would not change the facts on the ground. That is true, but it is not a reason not to recognise Palestine, which would be purely a political decision by the United Kingdom as a sovereign Parliament. It would be a powerful gesture to Palestinians that they will obtain their state in the future after 47 years of cruel and unjust occupation and it would strengthen the hand of President Abbas against Hamas.

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Indeed, recognising Palestinians would be only a small and logical evolution of the current position of the United Kingdom. It has been the Government’s view since 2011 that the Palestinian Authority have developed successfully the capacity to run a democratic and peaceful state founded on the rule of law and living in peace and security with Israel. To paraphrase a familiar expression, if it looks like a state and fulfils the criteria for a state, surely it should be recognised as a state. What entitles the United Kingdom to withhold a recognition that is the birthright—the long overdue birthright—of each and every Palestinian child? It would be shameful not to take the step of recognition now, when it would make a real difference.

The United Kingdom was a midwife at the birth of Israel and is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. That means an aspiration to take a lead in world affairs. We should take that lead now on this vital issue through a decisive vote of the British House of Commons.

**6.53 pm**

**Mike Wood (Batley and Spen) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Easington

(Grahame M. Morris) on securing this debate; he has done all in the House a great service.

I cannot think why any supporter of Israel should oppose the recognition of a Palestinian state. We know the history of Israel from its beginnings in 1948, as outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Sir Gerald Kaufman). We know about the six-day war in 1967 and about Israel's present situation. In 2013, Mr Kerry warned that there were only two years to resolve this flashpoint and that time was running out. He was surely talking to the Israelis as much as to the Palestinians. The two-state solution is disappearing rapidly before our very eyes.

We have to grapple with the issue of what will happen if there are not two states. What does the one-state solution look like? We are told that the majority of the present Israeli Administration no longer accept a two-state solution. Mr Netanyahu has suddenly become a rather centrist pragmatist, holding together a coalition, many of whom are to the right of him, in wanting a one-state solution. Do they accept the genocide and ethnic cleansing that go along with that?

The situation is far worse than that in apartheid South Africa, which has been mentioned. It has been regularly referred to as a parallel to what is going on in Palestine, but the situation in Palestine is much worse than apartheid. The white junta in South Africa accepted that somewhere in the country—preferably not near them—there would be land for black people. It was the worst possible land and a long way from the ruling white group, but none the less the junta accepted that there would be a place for the blacks. A one-state solution in Israel does not accept such a thing. There is no place in Israel and Palestine for the Palestinians. We have to face squarely what that means and so do the Israelis. That is even more reason why we should not give the Israelis a veto over Palestinian statehood.

We will be voting tonight for the recognition of a Palestinian state. That is not just about recognising the inalienable right of Palestinians to freedom and self-determination but about Israel's need to be saved from

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itself. What Israel is looking at in a one-state solution is a continuation, year after year, of war and violence such as we have seen building in the past 20 years. The Israelis have just finished a third incursion into Gaza in 10 years. Are we suggesting that every two years another 1,500 people should be killed and another 100,000 people rendered homeless as a continuation of the process of driving everybody who is not Jewish out of what is considered to be greater Israel?

**Mrs Ellman:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mike Wood:** I would prefer not to, if my hon. Friend does not mind.

The occupation and exile have to end. There is never any peace without justice. Statehood for Palestine would strengthen—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing):** Order. I call David Ward.

6.58 pm

**Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) on securing the debate, which is so important.

As a young man, I backpacked around Israel and had a wonderful time. I stayed at various hostels—in



Ein-Gedi, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Eilat. I swam in the dead sea and went to Masada. I loved the place and its people and I wanted to return. I went back and spent time working with Mashav in the Arabic desert and living with an Israeli family. We had many discussions as we sat on our upturned vegetable boxes, drinking tea and taking a break from picking peppers and tomatoes. The farmer, the head of the family, told me over and over again about his personal experiences—his military service and how proud he had been to do what he felt was his duty in representing his country in the military. From where we were sitting, we could almost touch the Jordanian mountains a few miles away. He also told me about the real existential threat involved in being surrounded by what he regarded as hostile Arab states. I have never forgotten that or sought to trivialise it in any way, or to minimise the sense of insecurity that Israelis must feel.

That sense of insecurity—felt by many Jews, I suppose, throughout the centuries—has occurred as they suffered persecution throughout eastern and western Europe, and beyond. That persecution, as we all know, included an attempt at annihilation. Quite apart from the Zionist agenda, the need for a place to be safe somewhere was so important because of the failure to find safety from persecution in many other places. All that is perfectly understandable, but what I do not understand is why the Palestinians should have had to pay such a terrible price for the creation of the state of Israel, where it was believed that security could be created, or why the Israelis believed that the brutal expulsion and continued suppression of the Palestinians would ever lead to the sense of security that they seek.

I remember a meeting not too long ago in one of the big Committee rooms in the House of Commons at which there were lots of members of the Palestinian community. I said that the Israelis were winning; I was in despair at the lack of progress. I said that they will not negotiate and asked why should they when the immense support

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of the US and the inaction of the international community at large meant that they were gaining, day in and day out, and could ignore international law, continue to act with impunity, and, of course, increase their holding of Palestinian land. But a Palestinian rebuked me, saying that they were not winning because “We have not forgotten and we never will forget.” How can the Israelis believe that they can ever have security, because the Palestinians will never forget?

**Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con):** My wife, who is a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross, met many Palestinians in south Lebanon who still have keys round their neck on a string from the house that they were ejected from in the late 1940s. They will not forget.

**Mr Ward:** Indeed—how could they?

I support the motion for many reasons, but I will state three. First, for the Palestinians to turn away from the men of violence, they need hope, and this motion represents a degree of hope for them. Much is made of the failure of Hamas to recognise Israel, and we know about that, but let us imagine the sense of despair that ordinary Palestinians must feel at the failure of the international community to recognise their right to exist. My tweet on the firing of rockets out of Gaza and the previous comments by Baroness Tonge were never, of course, condoning terrorist acts by Palestinians; they were simply our recognition of the despair and sense of hopelessness that leads to terrorism.

Secondly, Israel is in breach of the contract set out in the Balfour declaration stating that

“nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”.

In the light of the Nakba and everything since, that seems like a sick joke. The failure of the international community to recognise the state of Palestine has helped Israel to ignore this commitment.

Thirdly, on a personal note, this Sunday at Eden Camp in north Yorkshire there will be a gathering of the Palestine veterans. They will parade at 1 o'clock, but many of them will not be able to walk very far, if at all—they are all over the age of 80. They went to that land in 1945 as a peacekeeping force, but lost over 700 members of the armed forces and 200 police. I believe that we owe it to them for tonight's motion to succeed. Many were not conscripts; many were veterans of Arnhem, Normandy and Bergen-Belsen. Many felt, and still feel, betrayed by Israel and question the sacrifice that so many of their colleagues made. If this vote on recognising the right of Palestinians is won, they will very much welcome it, but it has been so long in coming.

7.4 pm

**Anas Sarwar (Glasgow Central) (Lab):** I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in this historic debate on the recognition of statehood for Palestine: one small part in righting a profound and lasting wrong. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Grahame M. Morris) on securing the debate and, in so doing, again demonstrating his commitment to justice and to the region. This issue has widespread public support in the UK and across the world. That has been shown by the hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets over the summer to protest against the continued

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bloodshed in the region, and by the flooding of Members' in-boxes by constituents asking us to support this important motion.

As we have heard, this debate follows on from the failure of the UK Government to support Palestinian statehood at the UN. In 2011 and in 2012, Labour Members urged the Government to support the Palestinians' bid for recognition at the UN. Let us be clear: this was a missed opportunity and a shameful moment for the United Kingdom and our claim to be leaders on the international stage for justice and democracy. The selective way in which the British Government apply their force and resource is, sadly, self-evident. I am therefore pleased that this motion has strong cross-party support and that it does not split on party lines, or even between those who class themselves as pro-Palestinian or pro-Israeli. Rather, it is a motion that is pro-justice and pro-peace.

Palestinian statehood is in the interests of the people of Palestine and the people of Israel, because with statehood come rights and responsibilities. The rights are the ability to govern freely, both politically and in the judiciary; the powers and the infrastructure that, we hope, will deliver for the people; and economic freedom, with the ability of the country to grow its own economy and create prosperity. Palestine has the resources and the skills to be a self-sustaining, functioning country. In 2010, the UN found that the overall cost of the occupation to the Palestinian economy was estimated at nearly \$7 billion, or a staggering 85% of GDP. As I said, there are not only rights but responsibilities. Statehood obliges the Palestinian Government to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for their people. It requires Palestinian forces to abide by international rules on armed conflict, and it requires the Palestinian people to accept and learn to co-exist with all their neighbours. The recognition of a state is not an endorsement of any political party or any group within Gaza or the west bank—far from it.

There are moments when the eyes of the world are on this place, and I believe that this is one of those moments. What message will we send to the international community? There will be those living in Palestine who keep hearing that word, "peace", while at the same time seeing a continued occupation, an ongoing blockade, further expansion of illegal settlements, and the never-ending cycle of violence and

bloodshed, causing fear on both sides of the conflict.

**Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab):** Did my hon. Friend see the film on Saturday on BBC 2, “The Gatekeepers”, which showed the people who were at the most senior level of the Israeli security service, now retired, urging for the sake of Israel itself a willingness on the part of the Israeli Government to negotiate with all, including Hamas? It is a great pity that the Israeli Government refuse to accept such common sense.

**Anas Sarwar:** I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. The key point is that there is widespread support within Israel for this motion on the statehood of Palestine. People who are friends of Israel, who are Israelis, and who class themselves as part of the struggle to find a peaceful resolution for the people of Israel recognise that the motion is not only in the interests of Palestine but fundamentally in the interests of Israel too.

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To go back to the issue of previous false dawns in Palestine, the people there have been hearing warm words for decades, but I am sorry to say that words are no longer enough. Our best chance of seeing a rejection of violence and militant forces is by rekindling hope so that people can stop hearing the word peace and start living its true meaning.

This motion is an opportunity to start addressing decades of failure, which are a shame on the entire international community. It has been said that supporting the motion somehow undermines peace and the two-state solution, but it actually does the opposite. This motion does not disregard the two-state solution; it endorses it. This motion does not undermine the peace process—there is no peace and there is no process—but it shows that we are serious about finding a lasting solution. This motion does not damage Britain’s role or undermine its standing in the international community; it actually goes a long way to restoring its standing in the international community. This motion is not a failure of leadership; it is a demonstration of it. That is why I will passionately and proudly walk through the Aye Lobby tonight.

7.10 pm

**Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con):** I had not anticipated being called to speak, so I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The proposal for this House to recognise Palestinian statehood is not only premature, but misguided. An affirmative vote tonight would be nothing more than a propaganda victory for those who wish to bypass the mediation of the peace process in favour of international institutions such as the United Nations where the Palestinian Authority enjoy an automatic majority.

Three years ago President Abbas made it explicit that the attempt unilaterally to assert statehood through the UN was to ensure that it

“would pave the way for the internationalisation of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one. It would also pave the way for us”—

the Palestinian Authority—

“to pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations, human rights treaty bodies and the international Court of Justice.”

The Palestinian Authority are seeking to create opportunities for new diplomatic and legal fronts on the conflict with Israel that enable a distraction, an alternative and an escape route from the bilateral principle entailed in the Oslo accords and subsequent diplomatic frameworks.

**Jeremy Corbyn** *rose*—

**Grahame M. Morris** *rose*—

**Dr Offord:** I will not give way at the moment.

The proposers of this motion are aiding those efforts and turning their backs on the peace process. That is not a proposal that I can accept.

The middle east peace process is underpinned by several key documents—this has not been addressed tonight —that prohibit the unilateral diplomatic action this motion would allow and which the same documents deem to undermine the prospect of a negotiated settlement.

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In 1993 the Palestine Liberation Organisation committed itself to a declaration that

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